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Short abstract of thesis for M.A. (Anthropology)  
entitled  
Cultural Change, with special reference to the Hill  
Tribes of Burma and Assam.  
by F.F. Leach, M.A. (Cantab.)

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The accepted ethnography of the Assam-Burma-Indo-China Region presumes that each distinguishable linguistic group has a distinct history; such "tribes" are deemed permanent, discrete and clear cut. In contrast to this I suggest that the cultural differences observable at any one time are unstable and transitional.

Only the cultural extremes are relatively permanent; these correlate with economic organisation. Throughout the area the basic contrast is between groups with economies based upon irrigated wet rice worked in alluvial valleys and groups living in a mountainous terrain under one or other of several possible forms of economic organisation.

Rice growing valley people can readily produce a surplus; hill dwelling people can seldom raise themselves above subsistence level without economic assistance from outside. In the east of Assam and in the north-east of Burma the Hill Peoples (Kachins) and the Valley Peoples (Shans) are economically and politically in symbiosis. Diachronically this results in a persistent transfer of individuals and groups from one economic and cultural setting to the other. Synchronically transitional variants can be observed. The mechanism of these changes is examined. Such cultural modification is independent of any changes resulting from European influence; European influence may sometimes hinder rather than accelerate changes of this type.

A study of the Kachin (Sing Ho) area of Assam in the period 1835-1845 and a similar study of a valley-hills border area near Bhamo (Burma) between 1865-1880 provides concrete evidence that the distinctions "Kachin" and "Shan" have not remained stable.

The hypothesis that cultural instability is a normal rather than aberrant situation has implications both in the field of practical politics and in that of abstract sociological theory. Some of these are considered in the first and final chapters.

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CULTURAL CHANGE

with special reference to the  
Hill Tribes of Burma and Assam.

by

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Being a Thesis submitted for the  
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## INTRODUCTION

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### 1. Categories of Social Grouping

The factual data presented in this book are drawn from one particular geographical area, - namely Burma and Assam -, and in so far as any particular species of social process is demonstrated, the demonstration applies specifically only to that area. The problems examined and the method of treatment are however of more general significance. In this Introduction, and again in my brief final Chapter, I shall try to express my theoretical approach in abstract terms so that the relevance of the general argument to other fields such as perhaps Africa or New Guinea may be more readily appreciated.

One central theme runs through all my discussion; it is this. What is the nature of the residual categories<sup>1</sup> of human social grouping? How can such residual categories best be described? In this book I have found no satisfactory solution to the second of these questions, though it seems to me I have pushed some way forward into an examination of the first.

The conventional terminology of anthropology divides up humanity into various types of grouping large and small. There are to begin with the very arbitrary categories "primitive" and "civilised", and then such categories as "race", "tribe",

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1. For concept of Residual Categories see Parsons, 1, p.17; Stebbing, 1, p.346.



"society", "culture", All these terms are very imprecisely defined, or at any rate there is no real agreement about the use of such terms by workers in different fields. The word "Society" for example as used by an historian such as Toynbee<sup>1.</sup> seems to have quite a different range of meaning from the sense given to it by a social anthropologist such as Radcliffe-Brown;<sup>2.</sup> the word "race" which at one time represented a classification at least as much in terms of culture and language as of physique, has among professional anthropologists now come to be restricted to categories of physical type;<sup>3.</sup> but among other disciplines and by the lay public it is still used in its broader and looser sense. The 1931 Burma Census for example specifically uses racial and linguistic categories as synonymous<sup>4.</sup>; this despite the fact that as long ago as 1906 the physical anthropologist Gupte showed that the "tribes" of Burma were not distinguishable as physical types, a conclusion broadly confirmed by Guha in a more recent re-examination of Gupte's figures.<sup>5.</sup>

The specific confusions introduced into the Burma literature by this indiscriminate use of the term "race" will be considered in detail in later chapters but for the moment I want only to consider the logical confusions that arise from the use of imprecise categories of any sort. Let us for

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1. Toynbee Vol.1. passim.
  2. Radcliffe Brown, 1, p.10.
  3. Buxton, 1,
  4. Bernalson, 1,
  5. Gupte 1 and 11; Guha 1.

the sake of argument assume that in a particular geographic field there are in fact no intrinsic discrete groupings of the human population; let us assume that whether we measure physical type ("race"), or cultural behaviour ("culture"), or political organisation ("society") there is a persistent merging of the characteristics of the population of one area into that of the next. In short we suppose that the field is a continuum, a "smooth curve" of variation with no sharp discontinuities. Now as soon as we break up that continuum for descriptive purposes into a set of discrete entities, - races, cultures or societies, - we create logical discontinuities, and, in the void between each step, a set of residual categories. These residual categories are exceedingly difficult to examine in terms of the artificial discrete entities we have just created.

Let me take an example. To anyone familiar with the geography and the distribution of population in North Burma it is a simple matter to postulate that "Kachins" may shade off into "Shans" who in turn shade off into "Burmese". Provided everyone remains pleasantly vague about just what is meant by the terms "Kachins", "Shans" and "Burmese", we can recognise in this area a cultural continuum. But as soon as we start defining more precisely the meaning of our cultural categories, we break down this continuum into three discrete discontinuous steps; it then becomes very difficult to examine the frontiers between these categories. The tendency is to fall into such terminological analogies as "a network of relations", or a



"contact" or an "impact" between two discrete sharply defined entities. Clearly on the premise of a cultural continuum such analogies are inadequate. There can be no "impact" or "contact" between adjacent parts of a continuum.

But though it is easy to recognise the logical difficulty, it is by no means easy to avoid it. Even if it is recognised that the categories of cultural or social grouping are only artificially conceived modal points representing different parts of a smooth curve, it is still very difficult to avoid treating these modes, in discussion, as if they were precise entities.

The difficulty is very clearly demonstrated in the extensive ethnographic literature of the Naga tribes of Assam. Careful reading of the work of Hutton, Mills and Fürer Haimendorf<sup>1</sup> shows that all these authors are fully aware that the various categories Angami, Gema, Ao, Rengma, Konyak and so on are not precise entities. There is everywhere a shading off from one group to another. The various labels have in any case in large measure been devised by the ethnographer for convenience of description. But once the categories had been made and generally accepted they became increasingly precise. The different Naga monographs at every stage stress the contrast between one group and the next; similarities are slurred over<sup>2</sup>.

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1. See Bibliography. A complete list of Professor Hutton's writings on the Naga Tribes would however exceed 50 titles.
  2. Numerous diffusionist correlations between Naga sub-groups, China, Kachins, Abors etc., have been made. No specific Naga pattern has been defined. The units are Angami, Gema, Ao etc. See Smith 119/154; Hutton vii; Hutton in Mills J.P.1 no XV-XXXIX, Kaufmann.



It is assumed without question that it is legitimate to assert that "the Ao Naga does --" this that or the other thing without any careful examination of how such generalised assertions relate to conditions in fringe areas where admittedly there is considerable shading off and lack of cultural definition.

This presumption, that a human grouping somewhat arbitrarily defined conforms to a standard stereotype of behaviour so closely that detailed variations can for most purposes be ignored, has been part of the general apparatus of anthropology since the earliest times and it persists even in the work of modern social anthropologists. The Nuer, Dinka and Anuak, as described by Evans Pritchard for example<sup>1</sup>; are sharply discrete entities with a bare minimum of fusion and cultural overlap at the geographic fringes of their respective territories. My thesis is that the presumption of the predominance of such stereotyped or normal behaviour virtually precludes a satisfactory analysis of the social processes operating in these fringe areas. But if one accepts the fairly generally held hypothesis that "diffusion" is the primary motivation of cultural change, then clearly it is these fringe areas which are of paramount importance in our analysis of the change process.

It follows then, if this reasoning is correct, that practically the whole range of phenomena usually covered by  
 1. Evans - Pritchard 1,11,

the labels "Acculturation" or "culture contact" lie in a field which is residual in respect to the normal form of anthropological description, which divides up the large scale social continuum into a number of discrete categories. This would explain the unsatisfactory nature of the techniques so far proposed for the analysis of cultural change. It is well demonstrated I suggest in the work of Malinowski.

When Malinowski resided in the Trobriands during the first World War period the inhabitants were not in strict fact an isolated untouched primitive community. They had already experienced some fifty years of "Western Culture Contact" though this fact is largely ignored in Malinowski's writings. Malinowski's analysis of Trobriand culture proceeds on the assumption that the "impact" of the West can be ignored, that the functioning system is closed, stable, and "integrated." Many years later when he had become interested in the processes of change, particularly as exemplified in Africa, Malinowski himself recognised that the system of concepts developed around the premise of Trobriand stability and closed integration was not immediately applicable to a palpably changing situation

The functional method has been worked out with the purpose of describing and analysing one culture, and a culture at that, which through age long historical development has reached a state of well balanced equilibrium. These two main suppositions of functionalism, in its simplest form break down in culture contact studies



But in attempting to resolve this paradox he refused to abandon the dogma of the essential integration of all institutional fields. The limitations of this dogma seem to me to preclude any satisfactory thinking in relation to the critical "culture fringe" areas which I assert are residual in terms of such a concept. Malinowski's posthumous work The Dynamics of Culture Change<sup>1.</sup> seems to me to lend support to this assertion.

Part of Malinowski's difficulties in this field seem to me to derive from the fact that he, along with many other writers, presumes that the only form of diffusion that results in any significantly important cultural changes is that associated with the "impact" of the "Civilised" upon the "Primitive", or more particularly of the "White Man" upon the African. On one occasion, due presumably to a slip of the pen, he actually committed himself in print to the astonishing statement that

"By the term Culture Change we designate the processes and factors which result from the impact of European Civilisation on the peoples and tribes administered in the colonies"<sup>2</sup>

Now certainly this is a species of Culture Change, but surely it is a somewhat extreme variety? If unaccounted residues are introduced merely by dividing up a block of adjacent humanity into two stereotypes Angami Naga and Sema Naga, how much

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1. Malinowski, (ii)
  2. Malinowski, (iii)



vaster and more complex are the residues lying between the massive categories European Civilisation and Primitive Tribe!

With the increasing interest in change process that has developed in recent years, it is natural that many writers should have become aware of the inadequacy of existing types of theory when applied to this particular field. The Wilsons' recent work The Analysis of Social Change<sup>1.</sup> is a definite attempt to devise a theory which, while retaining the most valuable features of the institutional approach of Malinowski and the structural approach of Radcliffe-Brown, will yet be sufficiently elastic to comprise the whole range of rapidly changing social phenomena that are to be encountered in modern Africa. In my view this work also is a failure, and for the same reason, namely that the range of contrast against which the change process is viewed is much too vast. Again there is the preoccupation with Civilised and Primitive, and the insistence that the contrast is typified by Englishman and Bantu African.

Now I agree that the change process must be viewed against a background of cultural contrast, for without some such fixed points of reference all social "movements" are purely relative, but if we are to limit the range of residual alternative explanations, we should make the range of contrast as narrow as possible. If change is to be measured as between

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1, G & M Wilson, 1,

one pole labelled "Civilised Man" and typified by a New Yorker, and another pole labelled "Primitive Man" and typified by an Australian Aboriginal then it seems to me we cannot hope for an analysis that will contain anything more than extremely vague generalisations. If however we take as our contrasted types the plainsdwellers, rice-growing, peasants of North Burma - commonly known as Shans and their immediate neighbours in the hills - the Kachins and Palaungs - and study their mutual interactions then perhaps we may be able to get a little beyond first principles.

That anyway is the justification for this book

### The continuity of Primitive Groupings

In the foregoing section I have suggested that in the Burma Assam area at any rate the discrete groupings of the human continuum are much more arbitrary than is commonly realised and that their discreteness is less a matter of fact than of descriptive treatment.

It has of course long been realised that such discrete groups however defined interact upon one another. The whole system of historical diffusionist reconstruction is built up upon this realisation. Certain very simple logical implications of this principle however are not commonly appreciated. If two neighbouring entities A and B constantly interact upon one another, so that A contributes "traits" to B,

and B contributes "traits" to A, in what sense it is possible to say that the final product A' is "the same as" the original A.?

Diffusionist theories here do not appear to me to be very consistent; there seems usually to be an implied presumption either that the diffusion process is extremely slow, or else that it took place in remote antiquity and then ceased, yet in any case the identity of the group is held to persist, not only structurally but culturally. The Nagas are a case in point. The various Naga tribes are defined culturally, mainly, but not consistently, in terms of language. They are clearly not strictly discrete in a structural sense since the same clan or lineage often crops up in more than one "tribe". But Hutton, Mills, Smith<sup>1</sup>, and others have been at pains to demonstrate that the various cultural attributes of these tribes have been borrowed from one another and from outside sources. There is an extensive literature upon trait links between the Naga Hills and the Philippines, Melanesia, and even Madagascar, let alone localities rather nearer at hand. Yet the Nagas are deemed to have been in their present habitat all the time. Ptolemy's nango logai - which merely means naked people - are confidently asserted to be the same as the modern Nagas.<sup>2</sup> Yet parallel with this Hutton constantly stresses the great diversity

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1. Cf. p4. Notes 1 and 2.

2. Smith, 1,169 also footnote by Hutton on same page. Ibid, 167 footnote by Hutton.



of physical type to be found among the modern Nagas.<sup>1</sup>

Further he argues that rice agriculture in the Naga Hills is a quite recent innovation which has replaced a formerly general species of taro agriculture.<sup>2</sup> I am quite ready to accept this, but what puzzles me is in what sense the present Angami Naga - the most striking feature of whose culture is their spectacular terraced rice fields - would still be Angami Nagas if they lived in relatively small villages cultivating taro!

This type of inconsistency may again be partly one of logic. Since the components of the category - race, tribe, culture etc., - are presumed to be uniform, change is deemed to take place as an even process. A culture formerly in state A changes as a whole into state A'. Now it can readily be seen that in any particular case the change process is uneven. Assuming an initially homogeneous culture in state A, then the secondary state will be confused, parts of the whole may remain in state A, others change to A', and still others fall into still further residual conditions. The difficulty is that so long as the descriptive categories are regarded as discrete, this process of uneven change, which is the norm, cannot be conceptualised.

My hypothesis is that with very rare exceptions no primitive society is ever in a state of complete cultural

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1. Ibid. 149, 150 footnotes and numerous similar references.

2. Hutton, vi, 29, 63.

stability; that being so, it is a fundamental necessity of clear thinking that the categories into which the human continuum are divided should not be defined culturally as discrete entities. If an Angami Naga is defined as "someone belonging to a particular cultural milieu which is distinct from all others," then clearly there is no room for cultural change at all within the set of cultural categories of which Angami is one.

I myself in this book will make constant use of terms such as Kachin, Shan, Palaung etc., which in existing literature are defined as discrete entities in cultural terms. It is a fundamental part of my argument however that the groups thus labelled by me have no specific cultural characteristics, and are not at any one time culturally homogeneous. This point will be further elaborated at a later stage.

Continuity however can be conceived not only culturally but structurally. It is the persistence of systems of organisation in time independently of the individual human components of such systems which constitutes the essential feature of social structure as conceived by Evans Pritchard<sup>1</sup> and, I think, Fortes.<sup>2</sup> On this account, for example, Evans Pritchard in his study of the Nuer has excluded the family from his concept of structure because he regards it as

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1. Evans Pritchard, 1, 107

2. Fortes, 11, 30 and passim

transitory in contrast to the lineage which persists.<sup>1</sup>

This standpoint again seems to me to make it extremely difficult to examine either fringe conditions where two different types of structural system are overlapping, or changing features of the structural system itself. The structuralist approach seems to me to permit the examination of one, and only one, type of change, namely segmentary fission or accretion in which the final arrangement of the system is strictly homologous to its original pattern. The possibility of changes in the structure itself are excluded as it were by definition. The difficulties of applying this type of analysis to anything but a strictly homogeneous society are well brought out in Fortes book on the Tallensi where, although the structural differentiation between Namoos, Mill Talis and Gorisi appear to be very slight, the mere fact of non-homogeneity results in very involved and often obscure analysis.<sup>2</sup>

Despite this criticism I feel that the concept of structural continuity is an extremely valuable one which should not be abandoned; instead it should be enlarged to permit of the co-existence of similar (homologous) structures of differing complexity and elaboration.

In this book I have not arrived at any satisfactory terminology descriptive of this type of structural variability

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1. Evans Pritchard, 1, 4.

2. e.g. Fortes, 11, 100 (diagram)



though its nature I think is fairly well demonstrated for the particular field under discussion. The social structures of Kachin, Shan and Burmese communities differ greatly one from another, but because there is an underlying homology in all three groups the mutual interactions under fringe conditions result in a more or less fluid state of adaptation.<sup>1</sup> In this fluid condition the fixity of particular cultural labels is merely relative and temporary; viewed diachronically it is possible for structural segments initially labelled Kachin to be adapted into the Shan milieu and to become a part of the at first sight very different Shan social system. Treating the cultural labels as fixed points one could then say that Kachins have "become" Shans. I have used this verbalisation in this book because it corresponds to the Jinghpaw linguistic phrase - san tai sai - but it is not a strictly accurate representation of what occurs. The elements that undergo cultural change may certainly in particular instances be individuals, but structurally speaking this is not necessarily very important. The structure is only affected when what would normally be a persisting group - e.g., a lineage or a religious cult is so adapted that a different cultural label becomes more appropriate to its members than the original one.

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1. c.f. Evans Fritchard, 1, 131.

### The consistency of Institutions

While the structuralist viewpoint can thus be adapted to the examination of fringe conditions merely by recognising that the persisting elements of social structure may undergo change during the process of persistence, the institutional or cultural approach appears to be inapplicable in such conditions without a drastic re-orientation of basic theory.

The dogma that social institutions are necessarily functionally integrated appears to presuppose a specific boundary to the institutional integer, - which was for Malinowski "a culture." The very closely related dogma that "equilibrium is a fundamental social necessity" or that "disequilibrium must always press towards its own resolution"<sup>1</sup> appears to have similar implications. Those holding such views therefore necessarily regard change as an abnormality, and very commonly apply to it an adverse value judgement.

For Malinowski "change at any rate means at least temporary maladjustment".<sup>2</sup> According to Geoffrey Wilson

"The inevitability of equilibrium is one of the limiting conditions of human freedom. During any period of temporary disequilibrium society is characterised by pronounced social tensions which make the situation increasingly intolerable to the human actors until the disequilibrium is resolved."<sup>3</sup>

Elsewhere the same author has identified "disequilibrium" with "unevenness of scale"<sup>4</sup> which in turn is a situation

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1. G & M Wilson, 1,134,173.

2. Malinowski, 1, XIV

3. G Wilson, 1,16.

4. G & M Wilson, 1,132

in which "the six elements and three forms of society" are not mutually consistent. Although the list of "elements and forms" is designated as a system of abstractions<sup>1</sup> it seems that the "elements" of Wilson's "society" are a close parallel to the "institutions" of Malinowski's "culture". For both authors lack of coincidence or inconsistency in the institutional organisation implies change of a disruptive and undesirable sort.

Such valuational judgements clearly prejudice the issue and tend to preclude the objective examination of non-coincident institutional arrangements.<sup>2</sup> My own view is rather the reverse of this. I suggest that the integrated culture held up by Malinowski as the standard norm is in fact a very special case of a much more general phenomenon. The most general situation is that in which there is no coincidence or consistency between the fields of different institutions. In such a case the unit of study defined in terms of politics will be wholly different from the unit of study defined in terms of economics or the unit of study defined in terms of religion and so on. In most practical cases however the overlap of institutional fields will be very considerable even if not complete. In the unique case where the coincidence is complete the unit of study is once more Malinowski's "integrated culture."

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1. Ibid. 82.  
 2. Fortes, 1, 61.



The material of this book provides solid grounds for claiming that institutional non coincidence is a "normal" phenomenon. I agree that such non-coincidence must result in change. I do not agree that such change can legitimately be represented in valuational terms as a "maladjustment" or that there is necessarily any tendency for the changing situation to resolve itself into a condition of unified stability

Cultural change as a unique or dual type process.

In the past sociologists and anthropologists have been hesitant as to whether the process of social or cultural change should be deemed a unique or dual type process. On the whole the preference seems to be for the latter concept. Pareto, for example, distinguishes between "normal" changes which do not disturb the overall equilibrium of the system and other changes which do<sup>1</sup>. The Wilsons follow Pareto very closely in this, though they cloud the issue by the strong valuational tone by which they distinguish the "positive or cultural forces of social change "with their "new ideals, ideas, and intuitions of beauty ....." and the "negative or structural forces" of change, which are "intolerable oppositions".<sup>2</sup>

The basic theme in this contrast is not difficult; -

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1. Pareto, 1, para 2067.

2. G & M Wilson, 1, 132/3

it is that "societies" or "cultures" left peacefully to themselves will "evolve" quietly and very slowly without any disturbance, and that this is a totally different phenomenon from the violent and disruptive processes which workers in the African field believe they can observe going on before their eyes. In a similar way Dr. Mair has remarked:

"Most native societies are now undergoing a process of rapid and forcible transformation comparable only to the violent changes of a revolution, and entirely distinct from the gradual, almost imperceptible, process of adaptation in which the normal evolution of human culture consists"<sup>1</sup>

So too Malinowski

Change may be induced either by factors and forces of spontaneous initiative and growth, or by the contact of two different cultures. The result in the first instance is a process of independent evolution; in the second that which is usually called diffusion"<sup>2</sup>

Yet despite the long history of the dichotomy between "evolutionary" and "diffusionist" change, the opposition seems to me a false one. How does Dr. Mair know that "normal evolution" is a process of "gradual almost imperceptible adaptation"? Besides, what does the word "normal" mean in such a context? If there are today any societies in the world still so economically isolated that the fact of evolutionary change could be demonstrated at all, they must surely be extremely rare? Surely it must be agreed that the normal

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1. Mair, 1, 3

2. Malinowski, 11, Introduction p.vii. From a lecture delivered at Copenhagen 1928.

source of change in all societies throughout the world is diffusionist; and that as a stimulus to change such external influences far outweigh in scale any theoretically possible evolutionist tendencies? Where societies can be observed undergoing change, they are societies experiencing the "impact" of diffusion; if the resulting change is also partly due to evolutionary causes this cannot be demonstrated.

The question still remains however as to whether one should distinguish between diffusionist changes which are mild and gradual, and those which are violent and rapid. It appears to me methodologically wholly undesirable to make such a distinction which can be based only upon entirely subjective judgements on the part of the observer. I am myself quite unimpressed by the elaborate concept of "necessary equilibrium"; it seems to me just as reasonable to postulate a "necessary state of change."

I agree, of course, that the factor of degree of change must be taken into account. It may well be that violent and rapid species of change contain elements which are absent in more moderate varieties of the change process, but I still hold that analysis should proceed from the general to the particular, and not the other way about. The allegedly violent changes associated with European-Primitive diffusion are palpably a special case; we are not entitled to assert dogmatically that these constitute a species of change



sui generis until we have analysed satisfactorily the processes involved in the simpler and more general forms of change that result regularly from diffusion in any locality where the cultural continuum is not rigidly homogeneous.

In this book I proceed on the assumption that cultural change is in its essentials a one type process. I therefore purposely draw most of my evidence from situations where the direct influence of the European was minimal. Against this background of "change without the European", the effects of "culture contact" in the sense of European-Primitive reactions can be seen in better proportion.

#### The basic themes of discussion

From what has been said above it follows that two alternative themes are constantly reiterated throughout this book; they may be summarised as follows.

Firstly, from the structural point of view, it is urged that labels attached to particular tribes or societies are to be regarded as cultural labels, descriptive, in a relative sense only, of a part of a larger cultural continuum. The position of elements of the social structure is not rigidly fixed in relation to this cultural continuum. It is an intrinsic feature of <sup>THIS</sup> their viewpoint that there is no general tendency within the cultural continuum as a whole

to move towards uniformity. On the contrary, factors such as variations in the topographical environment will alone ensure that, however the different parts of the continuum effect one another over the course of time, there will be no tendency towards homogeneity.

From this point of view, change may alternatively be described either as a change in the  $\overset{S}{\underset{\wedge}{R}}$  structure of a culture, or as a change in the culture of an element of the total structure. I am not satisfied with either of these forms of terminology, but either is preferable to the dogmatic assertion that structures ought to be in equilibrium or that cultures ought to be integrated institutionally.

My second major theme is the non-coincidence of institutions. The local community, which is the field directly observed by the anthropologist, is always a point of overlap of a number of non-coincident institutional fields. This non coincidence I hold to be "normal", and to be a part of the intrinsic mechanism of social development. The distinction between "satisfactory" (progressive) forms of change, and "adverse" (socially disruptive) forms of change may possibly be correlated with the extent to which there is this lack of coincidence. I have not myself pressed my analysis so far.

An important implication of both these central themes is that the field studied by the anthropologist (the local

community) can not normally be deemed typical of any larger homogeneous or homologous field. On this account I am highly sceptical about the applicability of statistical method as a technique for generalising the observations of the anthropological field worker. This point however falls outside the discussion of this book

A further implication of these central themes is that they restrict my use of source material. I am seeking to demonstrate a close inter-relationship between all the plains and hills peoples throughout the Burma Assam area. I argue that this interrelationship is based upon fundamental economic necessity; it is not just a matter of the distribution of cultural traits in the historical past, but an active functional interrelationship persisting into the present day. This interrelationship results not only in the movement of isolated traits across cultural boundaries but in the transfer of whole groups of people; that at any rate is the conclusion that I reach in the course of this book. But the standard ethnography of the area is based on the opposite hypothesis that the various tribal labels denote homogeneous groups characterised by uniform standardised behaviour. I am looking for evidence that cultural groups are neither uniform nor stable; books which take as a basic assumption the view that cultural variations are merely unimportant aberrations from



an easily defined norm are not likely to give me the evidence I need.

Because of this I make very little use of the standard authorities on the particular tribes of the area. Hutton and Mills for the Nagas, Wehrli, Hanson and Gilhodes for the Kachins, Marshall for the Karens, Scott for the Was<sup>1</sup> - all these accounts are from my point of view equally synthetic. I have therefore turned instead to the evidence provided by the less expert witness, the <sup>N</sup>uniformed traveller and the exasperated administrative officer. Reports by such people have, for my purposes, the supreme advantage that they are ethnographically unbiased. They may omit a great many facts that one would like to know, but they include a fair selection of observations of the type which the expert ethnographer commonly tends to exclude as being atypical or abnormal.

### Plan of Book.

To conclude this chapter, it will be useful to summarise the plan of the book chapter by chapter so that the reader will be able to appreciate the relationship of this design to the theory given above.

Chapter 2 defines the field of discussion and places the units of detailed analysis - Shans and Kachins - in their overall topographical and cultural setting.

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1. See Bibliography, part 1.

In Chapter 3.I describe what I call the "modal form" of Kachin Social structure. My use of the concept social structure here has a limited and special sense, which is distinct from that employed by structuralists such as Evans Pritchard. For such writers the structure of any aspect of a society is a skeletal pattern from which the deviations of actual behaviour can be regarded as variations.<sup>1</sup> Since I avoid the concept of any discrete entity labelled "Kachin Society", I have no single "social organism" of which my "structure" can be the skeletal pattern. The term structure indeed is uncomfortably rigid for my purposes. My "modal form" is itself conceived as one of a family of variations. This view is elaborated in the Chapter in question.

In Chapter 4 I demonstrate that there is a necessary economic relationship between the inhabitants of the various of the map area with which we are concerned. Given existing modes of agriculture I show, that if the conventional labels of "tribes" and "races" were to be interpreted as discrete then it is quite impossible that such entities should be economically integrated and self sufficient. I show in fact that many of the hill groups must be economically dependent on their neighbours, - either in other hill areas, or more commonly <sup>ON</sup> in neighbouring plains areas. Such

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1. A good example of this contrast is proved by E.E. Evans Pritchard Aspects of Marriage and the Family among the Muer (Rodes Livingstone Papers. 1945) and the same author's Muer Bridewealth (Africa, XVI, No 4, 1946, p 247. Both these articles deal with structural aspects of marriage among the Muer



economic interdependence is clearly likely, on *prima facie* grounds, to be linked with some form of political interdependence. If this argument is valid then the political interrelationship should be observable no less in the pre-British historical records than in the present day *Pax Britannica* situation.

In Chapter 5, I consider the general question of the political relationships between the hill people and their plains neighbours in the Burma field as a whole. This leads on to a further development of the concept of a cultural continuum as an alternative to the atomic type of interpretation which claims that there are some hundreds of different "races" or "cultures" within the frontiers of modern Burma. Great stress is laid in the general fluidity of the situation viewed as a whole.

In Chapter 5 I range fairly generally over the whole Burma area, but at a superficial level. In Chapters 6 and 7 I attempt more detailed analysis of two parts of the Kachin Hills Area to which the modal structural interpretation of Chapter 3 particularly applies. This detail fills out the general theoretical pattern provided by Chapter 5 and justifies me in claiming that general sociological principles are involved.

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Note 1 continued from Page 24: but while the first gives the picture of "a theme and variations", the second expressly omits consideration of the variations.



It will be seen therefore that I come almost to the end of my book without considering at all those species of change which most anthropologists have considered crucial, the "culture contact" or "acculturation" phenomena resulting from the influence of the European upon native institutions. This is in accordance with my general theoretical approach. I am out to demonstrate not only that "Kachin Society" was in a rapid state of flux before serious European intervention occurred at all, but also that the change process under pre-European conditions is merely a simplified version of what has taken place since. "Culture Contact" in its usual sense is therefore merely a specially complicated form of a normal social process; the relationship between the Hill Tribes of the Burma-Assam area and the British Administration is only a special case, - though an extreme one -, of the type of relationship often formed in the past with other indigenous political powers.

Where the final intrusion of the British was exceptional was in the massiveness and complete arbitrariness of the interference with the existing order. Burmese, Chinese or Shan administration in the Kachin Hills needed always to compromise. In pre-British times complete and permanent military domination of the hills was not a practical economic proposition. The changes induced among the hill peoples through "outside" interference tended therefore to take the

form of modification to the existing structure rather than radical innovations. In contrast the British could, and did, make completely arbitrary innovations dictated by world wide imperial policy rather than <sup>By</sup> local factors intrinsic only to the local Burma-Assam area.

I have been forced to distinguish between these forms of external political intervention. Political and administrative actions which arise logically from a consideration of economic and other pressures arising within the Burma-Assam area I designate as being due to the "inherent situation." Other types of action, as for example when the British incur quite abnormal military expenditure in the Kachin Hills because they regard this area as a strategic frontier of British India rather than an unimportant corner of Burma, I designate as being "externally imposed." Such types of change, since they do not arise out of the logic of the pre-existing situation, are very difficult to analyse, though I myself would hold that the actual change process involved differs only in scale and direction rather than in fundamental species from more "logical" forms of change.

In my Chapter 8 I consider some of these post annexation changes briefly, and lay stress on a feature which seems to me of importance, namely that while British Administration has greatly accelerated changes in the technological field, it has at the same time served to hinder or even reverse the concomitant changes that might have been expected to occur

in the field of social structure.

This view and other theoretical considerations  
are again reviewed in Chapter 9.

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## Chapter 2.

## The Field of Discussion.

Delimitation of the Area.

The rice producing centres of the Indo-China peninsular differ from all other rice producing areas of the Orient in that they are relatively sparsely populated. This is true in a local as well as in a general sense. It is not merely that the absolute population densities of the Irrawaddy, Menam, and Mekong deltas are lower than those of the Ganges and the Yangtse but that the immediate pressure on land as represented by the density per square mile of cultivated area is very much less. This is still true even after 80 years of large scale exploitation of the rice industry in the interests of western capital; prior to 1860 the condition was even more marked. It may be worth citing some figures to illustrate the current contrast.

The work of Buck and his associates on Land Utilisation in China suggests that, for rice producing areas in China, the density (per square mile of crop area) usually lies between 1,300 and 1,800 but that where humidity conditions

are sufficiently favourable to permit double cropping of rice - i.e., two crops of rice off the same land within 12 months - then densities up to 2,600 are possible.<sup>1</sup> Densities of 7,000<sup>2</sup> which have been suggested for some parts of the Yangtse River delta could only be maintained with the aid of very substantial food imports against an exchange of labour services.

Satisfactory figures from other areas are often lacking but it certainly appears that wherever rice is grown in the alluvial plains and valleys of China, Japan, Formosa, Java, Bengal and Madras the local density per square mile of crop area ranges between 1,000 and 2,500. In the Philippines the figure is somewhat less, - around 800, but in the Tonking area of Indo China (Red River Delta) it is again above 1,000<sup>3</sup>.

These high densities are in extraordinary contrast to the figures that prevail throughout the great block of territory composing the Indo-China peninsular. So far as

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1. Buck (1) Vol.1. p.362	<u>Density per sq mile of crop area.</u>
Area	1360
Yangtse - Rice/wheat	1780
Rice/Tea	1610
Szechuan Rice	2072
Double Cropping Rice	2636
South Western Rice	2636

2. Encyclopaedia Britannica 14th Edition. Article CHINA.  
Source Famine Relief. Commission Report.

3. Figures based mainly on various statistical data given in Encyclopaedia Britannica 14th Edition.

the export market is concerned, the territory comprising eastern Assam, Burma, Siam and Southern Indo China has for years been the principle rice granary of the world, yet in terms of population pressure the area still represents almost a "vacuum" in comparison with the highly stressed living conditions to the east and west.

For Burma as a whole official figures quote a crop area of 18 million acres against a population of 15 million which represents an overall density per square mile of crop of 530, but in the areas where rice is the main crop the densities are substantially lower than this. Thus for the delta provinces alone the figure are:- crop area 6.6 million acres, population 4.6 million, density 450. Similarly for the Upper Burma irrigated rice area (Shwabo and Kyaukse):- crop area is .65 million acres, population .95 million, density 440. In contrast to which the Upper Burma dry zone is:- crop area 3.8 million, population 3.6 million, density 610.<sup>1</sup>

I have not had access to comparable figures for the rice

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1. Based on data given in Notes on Agriculture in Burma (Government of Burma, 1943.)

Population figures are from the unpublished 1941 Census  
Delta provinces are taken as:

Pegu, Tharrawaddy, Ranthawaddy, Insein, Bassein, Ranzada, Myaungmya  
Maubin, Pyapon.

Dry Zone provinces are taken as: Thayetmyo, Magwe, Mibin, Meiktila, Xamethin, Myingyan, Pakokka, Lower Chindwin, Sagaing.  
The urban areas of Rangoon and Mandalay are excluded from the breakdown figures but not from the all Burma figures.



growing areas of Siam (Mekong Delta) and Cochin China (Mekong Delta) but what I have suggest densities per square mile of crop area well below 400.<sup>1</sup>

These figures give quantitative value to what is immediately obvious namely that whereas the peasantry of the rice growing areas of India and China and Java will go hungry if the mechanism of world commerce breaks down, the peoples of the Indo China area can very readily support themselves in basic foodstuffs out of their own immediate resources.<sup>2</sup> It is not unreasonable to suppose that this basic fact is reflected in the social relations of the peoples of the Indo China area.

Granted that it is very easy to exaggerate the direct influence of environment upon any particular example of social organisation, it remains I think true that the concept of a "population pressure" is a valid one. Given two neighbouring communities both dependent upon the same basic food stuff but at such densities that in the one case the pressure upon land resources is very much higher than the other, then I believe that it is a valid, and demonstrable proposition that there will be a tendency for population to flow away from the area of high pressure towards the area of low pressure. This I admit is a highly conditional

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1. Encyclopaedia Britannica 14th Edn. articles Siam, Indo-China, Cochin China.

2. This was well illustrated in 1943. The people of Bengal increased their rice acreage yet starved. The people of the Irrawaddy Delta enormously reduced their rice acreage yet still had a large surplus.

statement; in any particular practical example all sorts of political obstructions may operate to prevent this tendency taking effect. Nevertheless the tendency remains and is an important determinant factor in the total situation.

In my opinion just such a state of differential population pressure exists in all the countries of the Indo-China peninsular between the rice eating but hard pressed peoples of the hills and the rice eating, easy living, peoples of the plains. From first principles therefore, and ignoring for the moment all cultural or "racial" differentiations, one might expect a long term flow of population out of the hills into the plains. In this book I shall examine, for a part of this large area, how far this generalisation corresponds to the facts. This will necessitate an analysis of the economic, political and other social relationships that link together the peoples of the hills and the peoples of the plains. The tendency in the past has been to treat such groups as isolates with few significant interrelations one with another. In this book such groups are considered as joint members of one geographic whole. On logical grounds it seems reasonable to postulate a constant ebb and flow of population between different parts of that geographic whole. How far are such flows reflected in cultural or sociological change? That is my problem.

First however let us consider the limits of the geographic whole. I have mentioned already one demographic



peculiarity of the Indo China peninsular that sets it apart from neighbouring areas, - namely the low population pressure in the delta and coastal rice plain areas.<sup>1</sup> What other common features pertain to this region?

In the first place it is the drainage area of a series of great rivers the majority of which follow a parallel course from north to south. From east to west these principle rivers are: the upper reaches of the Brahmaputra, the Kaladyne, the Irrawaddy, the Sittang, the Salween, the Menam, the Mekong, and the upper reaches of the Red River (Song-Koi). Each of these rivers forms an alluvial delta, and it is these deltas which form the principle rice producing areas of the region. In their upper reaches these same rivers and their tributaries have the form of gorges which lie in a series of deep striations across the face of a terrain which might otherwise be a high level plateau. The result is an extraordinary series of parallel <sup>ORRU</sup> ~~comagations~~, with intervening mountain ridges.

Thus a traveller proceeding due east along the 24th parallel starting from the Surma River in Eastern Bengal crosses in succession the following rivers and ridges at approximately the altitudes stated.

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1. For the purposes of this book the southern tip of the "Indo China peninsular may be considered the Isthmus of Kra, though some of the generalisation here made might apply equally well to parts of Malaya. Similarly I exclude from consideration the Tongking area where population densities appear to be comparable to the conditions of Kwangtung rather than of Burma or Siam or Cochin China.



<u>River</u>	<u>River Altitude</u>	<u>Ridge Altitude</u>	<u>Ridge</u>
Surma (Meghna)	0	805	Atharemura
Konai	7500	1242	Langtarai
Dolai	7500	950	Sakhan Talan
Manu	7500	3283	Jampai Talan
Dhaleswari	71000	3180	
Tuival	72000	7000	
Manipur River	71500	7797	Taung Letha
Yu (Kabaw)	470	3059	
Chindwin	390	1905	
Mu	880	4046	
Meza	300	2601	
Irrawaddy	300	4115	
Sinkan	320	5399	
Nam Wan	2500	5060	
Shwell	2516	6058	
Salween	1900	78000	Pieh Shan
Nam Ting	4000	6000	
Mekong	2900	78000	Wulang Shan
Black River	3800	8300	
Red River	1600		

What is remarkable is not merely the number of the rivers but that nearly all of them are running almost due north and south. Striking also is the consistently high altitude of the intervening ridges even in cases where the river courses are only a few miles apart east and west; this in turn implies consistently steep inclines in the hills.

The only exception to the north south alignment of hills and rivers is in the north west. In the area between the Hukawng Valley (Upper Chindwin) and the Upper Brahmaputra the alignment is due east and west.

A direct consequence of this configuration of the terrain is that communications north to south are relatively easy, and mainly by water, while those from east to west are difficult and mainly by pack transport, animal or human. This

in turn has a politico-economic significance. The inhabitants of the hills, although seemingly very diversified in culture, have at least this in common that when left to themselves they live near the marginal limit of a subsistence economy:- they exist, but they have nothing much to spare. The fact that east to west traffic throughout the entire region is restricted to a few definite and long established trade routes through the mountains means further that the hill peoples of these particular localities have long been in possession of a political and economic asset denied to other neighbouring hill groups living away from any established trade route.

While the main rice producing areas are, as I have stated, in the delta areas of the main rivers, rice cultivation is far from being confined to these areas. Wet rice cultivation is carried on in almost all river valleys where there is any sort of an alluvial bed and where the altitude is not excessive, - which in practice means anywhere below about 5500 ft. It will be seen from the tabulation of altitudes along latitude 24 N. that even in the highlands of southern Yunnan, where much of the land lies at 6000/8000 feet, the actual river valleys are well within this practical limit for wet rice cultivation. And it is a fact that over the whole region, even in the most inaccessible and unexpected places, small alluvial pockets in the river valleys will be found exploited for terraced wet rice cultivation.

There are thus two somewhat differentiated types of "wet rice economy" to be found in the area. The first is linked with the large scale bulk production of the deltas, and is largely a development of the last eighty years, the second is the somewhat more sparse economy of the upland river valleys. Somewhat intermediate between these two types is bulk production that is dependent upon artificial irrigation, - such as for example that of the dry zone in Burma.

In this book I am not much concerned with the economy of the deltas though it is of crucial importance to my overall sociological theory that within all recorded historical periods the population pressures in these delta areas have been low. Since the British began to take records over a century ago there has been a steady flow of population from the relatively "high pressure" centre of Burma towards the "low pressure" delta area. This process is usually interpreted as a response to the excellence of British administration! My own view is that this observed flow is merely a symptom of a long term continuous process which is by no means confined to the Irrawaddy delta area though it has been enormously exaggerated by the development of a world wide rice trade.

That however is incidental to my general theme. What interests me particularly is the relationships between the



peoples of the "upland river valleys" and their neighbours in the adjacent hills. The status of these "upland river valley people" - whom as we shall see later coincide closely with the peoples usually labelled Shan - is relative. The hill people, including the Chinese of Yunnan, look upon the Shans wherever they are found as plainmen; the Burmese on the other hand regard them as people of the hills. Objectively their position is ambiguous. In the vicinity of Mogaung, Myitkyina and Bhamo Shans and Burmese are so culturally intermingled that only a pedant could distinguish one from the other - indeed these people are known locally as Shan-bama - "Shan-Burmese"; on the other hand in Kengtung and Keenwi Shan States there are people known as Tai-loi and Hkun-loi (i.e. Hill Shan) who are respectively indistinguishable from Wa and Palaung.

Generally speaking the peoples we are to consider in this book are known as either Kachins, Shans, or Burmese, and I was at first tempted to make a similar threefold category "hill people", "valley people", "plains people" to contrast the characteristic topographical features of the economies associated with these three groups. But in fact I am dealing with only two types of economy - wet rice and dry rice and in terms of this dichotomy the "valley people" and the "plains people" are one. Throughout this book therefore I use the simple contrast "hill people" and "plains people." So far as Kachins are concerned the plains people are mostly Shans; if our hill people were Karens or Chins then the contrasted

plainspeople are either other Karens or Burmese. This might suggest that the mass of the Burmese population in the central dry zone fall outside the field of discussion altogether. This is so to the extent that my primary discussion is centred round a rice growing people - the Kachins, but the millet growing people of the dry zone plains might equally well be contrasted with their Chin hill neighbours to the west who also conform to a primarily millet economy. It is in order to give the discussion this more general twist that I prefer to oppose hills and plains rather than Kachins and Shans, besides which it will be seen later that as cultural labels the terms Kachin and Shan are anything but fixed.

It is my belief that throughout the whole Indo-China region to which I have referred, the economic and political pattern that links the peoples of the hills and plains is uniform; that, for instance, generalisations that might be drawn from a study of the mutual relations of Meithei, Naga and Kuki in Manipur would apply in large part to the relations of Lao, Ka and Mōi in the north-west of Indo China. This however is only an hypothesis, and though I shall from time to time produce fragments of evidence from all parts of this vast field, my main interest is a very much more restricted one

As a primary focus of observation I am concerned with the Kachin Hills; at a secondary level I take into consideration Nagas and Chins to the west, and Lisu, Palaungs and was to the east. But I regard this detailed study as



merely a sample of a much larger area extending at least to the boundaries of the Indo-China block previously mentioned. Thus while, in the Kachin Hills context, the relation of hills people to plains people implies the relations of "Kachins" to "Shans", I feel that it is legitimate on occasion to cite as evidence for my general argument data derived from the relations of "Karens" to "Shans", or of "Was" to "Shans", and so on. Needless to say I shall make clear in each case where the evidence is based.

For the purposes of this study the term Kachin Hills Area may be taken as comprising the whole of the map area within the following boundaries:

Starting at Sadiya on the Brahmaputra at 95-45 E. draw a straight line due east to Pondang on the Salween (Lu Kiang) at 98-40E, 27-50 N., then draw a line due south as far as latitude 23 N. From this point follow the 23rd parallel westward as far as the Irrawaddy and thence follow the Irrawaddy upstream as far as Katha, then westward to longitude 95-45 E; and thence due north again to the starting point, Sadiya.<sup>1</sup>

### The "Tribes" and so called "Races" of Burma.

Even in this preliminary definition of primary study area I have already been forced to mention a number of "tribal" groups. I have already explained in the previous Chapter that I am sceptical concerning the real degree of social discreteness to be inferred from these various labels;

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1. Recent expert geological descriptions of these areas are given by WARD (111) and STAMP (11)



it may be well to explain just what body of authoritative opinion I here have against me.

Official (if not expert) opinion asserts that the population of Burma is composed of a large number of "races". There is an official handbook on "The Races of Burma,"<sup>1</sup> Census Reports divide the population according to race, even Stevenson who has had modern anthropological training persists in referring to these races.<sup>2</sup> Modern anthropology restricts this term to a strictly biological connotation, and has reached the stage of doubting whether any clear cut categories of race can be made at all.<sup>3</sup> How far then are the alleged races of Burma definable a physical type? The available data so far as it goes shows that the racial types are indeterminate, it also suggests that variation is more effected by locality than "race". Guha<sup>4</sup> has applied statistical method to data collected by Gupte<sup>5</sup> about 1906; he finds that Gupte's Shan-Chinese are practically indistinguishable from his Kachins, and that his Balaungs are very similar to his Shans, but that the Shans and Shan-Chinese are relatively remote. I have checked back on this data and find that Gupte's Kachin and Shan-Chinese specimens were all collected on the same day at or near Bhamo, while

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- |                       |                                |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Enriquez (1)       | 2. Stevenson (v) <u>passim</u> |
| 3. Krogman (1)        | 4. Guha (1)                    |
| 5. Gupte (1) and (11) |                                |



his Shan and Palaung specimens were all collected on the same day at or near Hsipaw. It will be noted then that so far as they go these figures fully conformed with my hypothesis that in any particular local area groups of persons may move from one part of the cultural continuum to another.

No-one however seems ever to have seriously contended that the "races" of Burma were distinct physical types. In most of the literature the term is used as synonymous with "tribe"; the criterion of differentiation is nearly always language, - in the Census reports it is specifically so.<sup>1</sup> The bulk of the literature of course derives from administrators and other government officials rather than from professional anthropologists and on that account may possibly be passed over as "inexpert." The professionals however seem equally to blame. Bastien (1863) wrote of Volkerstamme and Volkeracen; in later years Wehrli (1903), Schermann (1914), Von Eickstedt (1928)<sup>2</sup> were all professionals but did nothing to correct the conception of "an ethnological thicket"<sup>3</sup> of innumerable "races", in fact the last named specifically treats the various groupings as Rassen; finally it should be remembered that the 1931 Census (Bennison) formed a part of the Census of India of that date, which was under the general editorship of a competent anthropologist (Hutton).<sup>4</sup> Thus government

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1. Bennison (1) para 99.

2. See Bibliography Part 1.

3. Scott (v)

4. Professor Hutton himself states that the term "race" as used in this Census "is generally used so loosely as almost to defy definition." Census of India 1931, India, Vol. 1. Pt. 1, p. 425.



officers who use the term race in this loose and unorthodox sense can at least claim that they have authoritative support.

So far as I have been able to discover the only query against the straight forward identification of linguistic group and race was raised by Green who substitutes for this simple determinant a rather obscure set of mixed physical and cultural characteristics<sup>S</sup> assessed not by an exact measurement but by general photographic appearance!<sup>1</sup>

Faced with this vague unscientific classification it is difficult to know how to set about handling the mass of verbal labels which allegedly denote the tribes and races of Burma.

One feature however stands out immediately, the wet rice growing peoples of the plains and valleys are categorised in very broad terms - Shan (Tai)<sup>2</sup> and Burmese comprise practically the whole lot, while in contrast the peoples

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1. Green (1) including Plates.

2. The French prefer to Lao and Thai while the British refer to Shan and Tai. There is no consistent differentiation between any of these terms. Although the Siamese are not usually rated as "Shan" they are recognised as "Tai" indeed they themselves call their country Mong Tai (Thailand). The historical Ahom of Assam are usually rated as "Shan" though it is recognised that the modern Assamese can scarcely qualify. The terms Shan, Siam and Assam are all derived from the same source, namely the Burmese label for "Shans" which appears in various dialects as "Shan", "Sam", "Sham" etc. The Meithei of Manipur are not claimed as Shans but merely as "showing considerable Shan influence." Within the general category "Shan" there are of course a large number of sub-categories Hkanti, Shan-tayok, Shan-bama, Hkun etc which are discussed in the course of the book. See especially Chapter V.



of the hills are minute <sup>LY</sup> "atomized" into innumerable discrete groups, some of them only a few hundred strong. This contrast corresponds of course to the not very surprising fact that in the hills, where movement is relatively very difficult, dialect differentiation is very much greater than in the plains and valleys. It should not be supposed however because nearly all the valley peoples are classed as Shan "on the basis of common language" that in fact they all speak the same tongue; the dialects spoken in Hkanti Long, Hsenwi, Kengtung and Chiengmai may be the same language from the viewpoint of the philologist, but they are not mutually intelligible on the ground.

#### Definition of Cultural Groups (1) Major Categories

Despite these inconsistencies it would appear that even when the criterion of language does not wholly prevail the determinants of classification are cultural, and not physical or social characteristics. Very often differentiation turns on such simple overt characters as dress or hair style.<sup>1</sup> I shall therefore redefine these cultural labels so as to fit the requirements of my "relative" approach. In so doing I stick as close as possible to the general accepted meanings of the various terms.

Proceeding on these lines I can say that within the Kachin Hills area, as defined, (an area which I compute 1. c.f. Lewis (1) also Scott (11)).

at about 54,000 square miles) - the great majority of the hill peoples may be classified as Kachin. Likewise within this area the great majority of the plainspeople are Shan. There are also many other Shans outside this area, but there are few other Kachins. Those that there are might equally well be classified as something else, e.g., as Nagas, or Was, or "Kadus."

In a similar general though imprecise way it is legitimate to speak of the area to the west of the "Kachin Hills Area" as the "Naga Hills Area." To the south of this again lie the "Chin Hills Area" in which should be included the Lushai and Kuki tracts with Manipur a marginal area common to the Naga Hills and Chin Hills alike. East of the "Kachin Hills Area" the hill people are "Lolo", and to the south "Wa", and to the south again "Karen."<sup>1</sup> Except in the south where the Karen and Chin Hills border directly on the plains of lower Burma the "plains people" are almost always "Shans". The exceptions are the contacts of "Lolos" with "Chinese" as well as "Shans", of "Karens" and "Chins" with "Burmese", and of "Lushais" with "Bengalis."

We can thus block out the horseshoe of mountains surrounding the plains of the lower Irrawaddy into a series of "Hill Areas". In each of these areas there is a component

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1. The Hill peoples of the Central Shan States the Yang, Falaung, and Jaungtun can be classed as either "Karen" or "Wa." See Chapter V.



of the population which is engaged upon wet rice cultivation in the river valleys; this component is usually described as "Shan", but also in certain instances as "Burmese", "Arakanese", "Bengali", "Assamese", and "Chinese." The hill component of the population in these various areas is described at the crudest level of analysis as "Chin", "Naga", "Kachin", "Lolo", "Wa" or "Karen."

So far there need be no quarrel with the conventional terminology, so long as it is clearly recognised that these terms are loose descriptive labels and that the categories are not sharply distinguished one from another. The difficulty comes when we attempt to subdivide these very general categories into something more precise.

#### Definition of Culture Groups: Minor Categories.

In the literature all sorts of cultural, linguistic, and political labels are attached to groups of people, usually described as "races" or "tribes", but sometimes merely as "stocks" or even "clans", and it is invariably assumed, without any enquiry at all, that all such groups, whether large or small, or however defined, are comparable entities.

Now it requires no great sociological perspicacity to realise that in fact these various labels are attached to groups which are not comparable one with another. A few of these labels are applied to what MacIver would term

"Interest-conscious unities,"<sup>1</sup> that is, to groups the member of which are themselves aware of their group unity; the great majority of these labels however are more or less arbitrary categories applied by outsiders and not arising from any intrinsic unity within the group itself. Such groupings are at the best "loose configurations" or "quasi groups",<sup>2</sup> - that is to say, they represent categories of people having certain common interests and characteristics but lacking any organisation among themselves.

Consider for example the series of terms "Burmese", "Shan", "Kachin", "Maru", "Atsi", "Gauri". In round figures the Burma populations of these groups may be taken as 10,000,000; 1,000,000; 370,000; 40,000; 8,000; 3,500. The categories are not exclusive. Kachin usually includes Maru, Atsi and Gauri; Maru sometimes includes Atsi.

Burmese is a "nationality"; as such it is open to the argument whether it be classed as a group or a quasi-group.<sup>3</sup> Shan and Kachin, likewise represent rather vague classifications of the quasi-group type. This of course does not prevent people writing histories of "the Shans"<sup>4</sup> or even of "the Kachins"<sup>5</sup>

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1. Mc Iver (1); Ginsberg (1), 446.

2. Ginsberg (1), 449.

3. Ginsberg. (*ibid*)

4. "Histories" of the Shans are numerous and there is much confusion between legitimate historical studies of the early political relations of the ancient states of the Burma-China region and entirely hypothetical reconstruction about people called "the Shans" -

Key English references are Lacouperie(1), Hallett(1) Cushing (1); Parker(1); Scott(vi).

5. e.g. Hanson (v)



though the quality of such "history" is perhaps not all that it might be.

Maru is a term applied by Jinghpaw speaking Kachins to some of the inhabitants of the area to the east of the Nmai Hka and also to other "Kachins" elsewhere who speak the same language as Marus thus defined. These Marus outside the Maru area mostly call themselves Lawng-vaw and it is commonly thought that Lawngvaw and Maru are synonyms. But this is not the case. There are a variety of other vaw in the Maru country who are not Lawng - vaw yet are Maru to a Jinghpaw; Naing-vaw is an example and in the nett result "Maru" is no more specific than "Naga" or "Kachin".<sup>1</sup>

Atsi is a linguistic group with no political or general cultural unity -; there are Atsi communities in at least four widely separated parts of the Kachin Hills Area; Gauri on the other hand is a political group with only a very fictitious linguistic unity.<sup>2</sup>

Yet all these groups, differing as they do not only in scale but in kind and in precision, are alike referred to as racess or tribess or clans according to the mood and purpose of the expert concerned.

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1. No detailed ethnographic account of any of the Maru peoples has been written. Pritchard in 1914 asserted that "a study of their customs reveals that they are almost exactly similar to those in vogue among the Kachins". But no one has yet published such a study! Pritchard (i), 526.
  2. The accounts of Kachin "manners and customs" by George Gilhede and Hanson (see bibliography) are based almost entirely upon studies of Atsi and Gauri groups, so inversely the latter may now be regarded as "typical Kachins"!



The crux of the difficulty is that few of the names used in this conventional terminology are derived from words used by the people themselves; in nearly all cases they were based in the first place upon extremely vague categories made by other people.<sup>1</sup> Later attempts to refine the meaning of these terms have been confused by the application of two contradictory principles. On the one hand ethnographers have attempted to describe "peoples" - a "people" being in Evans Pritchard's recent definition<sup>2</sup> "all persons who speak the same language and have in other respects, the same culture, and consider themselves to be distinct from like aggregates"; while on the other hand the Census authorities have insisted on describing "races", - a race in the view of these workers being simply and solely "all people who speak the same language or who speak dialects which linguistic experts assert are closely akin."

That the narrow linguistic approach should be negative of results is hardly surprising, but at first sight it may not be clear why "peoples" should be difficult to define. The difficulty arises through the fact which I have already stressed in my introductory chapter; in this part of the world there is often a marked lack of coincidence between the range of the various cultural institutions. The groups which

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1. See Ward (1) Appx; Davies (1); Green (1)

2. Evans Pritchard (1), 5.



"consider themselves to be distinct from like aggregates" often do not all speak the same language; the groups which speak the same language often do not "consider themselves distinct from like aggregates". A community in a particular locality may possess an almost uniform culture - in all material aspects - and yet speak several different languages. Groups speaking identical languages may be found in half a dozen communities with widely differing economic organisation.

To give some examples:- (1) "We, the Jinghpaw" (anhte Jinghpaw ni.) are "distinct from other like aggregates", hkang for example, or sam, or muwa. Hkang includes all the people we know as Chins and Kukis and some of the Nagas (but not all)<sup>1</sup>; sam synchronises with our Shan; muwa (chinese) includes most of our Lolo. Jinghpaw itself includes speakers of Jinghpaw, Gauri, Dulang, Khabku, Tsasen, Atsi, Maru, Lashi, Mung but probably not Maingtha<sup>2</sup> which is a dialect of Maru. In context however a Jinghpaw speaker might, for local purposes

1. I think Hkang is probably the same as the old Burmese Khyau which was applied indiscriminately to all barbarous hillmen (see below). Shans describe Kachins as Hkang; Kachins describe Chins and some Nagas by the same term. In the Mwakung there is a distinction between Hkang to the South and Hkuman to the north (see Chapter VI). The Shans of Putao apply Hkuman to the M'ishai. Norree the first European to visit the western Mwakung (tare) in 1891 classified the local inhabitants as Theinbaws (i.e. Jinghpaw) and Chins. The latter would now be classed as Naga. Ref. Norree, (1)
2. Jinghpaw, Gauri, Dulang, Khabku and Tsasen are mutually intelligible dialects. Atsi, Maru, Lashi, Mung (Rawang), and Maingtha are regarded as dialects of a common stock but are none of them mutually intelligible. In the Maru and Mung areas east of the N'wai Mka there are a large number of further mutually unintelligible dialects of this same Maru stock.



only distinguish himself from any of these. Thus a Kachin in the east of the Sinlum hills might say he was a Jinghpaw in contrast to his cousin further west who was a Gauri. Maru and Lachis would usually deny that they are Jinghpaw.<sup>1</sup> Nungs class Duleng and Khehku as Jinghpaw in contrast to themselves, but would claim to be Jinghpaw in contrast to Lisu, and so on. (ii) In the Sinlum Hills the Gauri, who speak a dialect of Jinghpaw, live cheek by jowl with a group of Atsi whose language is akin to Maru and in the Burmese group of dialects. The Gauri chiefs are close classificatory brothers of the Atsi chiefs, most of the commoner lineages of the Gauri are duplicated by lineages of almost identical name among the Atsi. The political and kinship bond at all levels is fully recognised despite the contrast in language. On the other hand there are other Atsi groups living in other parts of the Kachin Hills who have no especial affiliation with the Gauri.

(iii) In the community of Hpalang in the Sinlum Hills, Jinghpaw, Atsi, Maru, and Chinese, were all spoken as mother tongue by different members of the community. The Jinghpaw, Maru, and Atsi speaking groups all partook of a joint community life at the same technological level.<sup>2</sup> (iv) People speaking

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1. But they recruit into the Jinghpaw (Kachin) companies in the army and police.
  2. Possibly the Chinese would have done so as well if they had had the chance, but they were segregated as a separate administrative entity by Government order.



identical dialects of Maru may be found in the highlands round Ktagaw growing buckwheat; or in the same area working hill terraced paddy land; or nearby, working conventional shifting jungle cultivation in large communities; or west of the Mali Hka working the same type of economy in very small communities; or in the Northern Shan States working shifting cultivation on open grassland; or at the foot of the Sinlun Hills working normal wet paddy cultivation in normal Shan style alongside Shans and other Kachins.

These examples demonstrate either that the data must be extremely difficult to analyse or else that the terminology of fixed grouping is inappropriate to the sociological facts. In my view the latter is the case. Before the end of this book I hope we shall have arrived at a more satisfactory understanding of the effective groupings of the peoples of both the hills and plains, but meanwhile it is necessary to explain in some detail just what the conventional labels as they appear in the literature really stand for. I shall confine myself to an analysis of the groups "Kachin" and "Shan" and their principle subdivisions.

### Significance and Origin of the term Kachin.

The area I have taken to be the Kachin Hills Area is that area within which Jinghpaw is now treated as the official lingua franca for official converse with the hill peoples. The boundaries thus defined have no special ethnical or cultural significance. If it be said that the hill peoples within this area are Kachins then at the boundaries of it Kachins shade off imperceptibly into Abers, Miris, Mishmis, Lolo, Lahus, Was, Shans, Burmese, Chins, Nagas. The map area includes the Tawngpeng Palaung - (who for official purposes are treated as Shans) but excludes other Palaung and Yang groups further south who are culturally very similar.

Moreover the great majority of the Lisu, Nung, Maru and Palung etc., within the Kachin Hills Area as defined, do not in fact speak any Jinghpaw at all, even though the Army and the Government rate them as "Kachins." My boundary then is arbitrary. To understand why this vague classification is useful and in accordance with current practice it is necessary to consider the historical development of the use of the term Kachin.

Why is the term "Kachin" applied to the hill people of this arbitrarily defined area at all? The details of the story are obscure but the sequence of events appears to have been something like this.



The first Burma hill people with whom the British came into contact were those of Tenasserim after the initial annexation in 1825. The local "Burmese" speaking with a Talaing dialect called them something which came to be romanized into "Karean or Kayen".<sup>1</sup> As the range of hill people who were contacted was increased, so the significance of "Karean or Kayen" increased too, until finally the term emerged as Karen in its modern very wide sense which includes the Sgaw and Pwo of the Toungoo and Bassein areas and the large number of differentiated linguistic groups which Scott would lump together as Bghai.<sup>2</sup> The burmese made a distinction between "red Karens" (Kayin-ni - "Karenni") and "white Karens" (Kayin-pyu) but it is doubtful whether this originally corresponded to any division which we would now recognise. Low, one of the earliest observers, remarks<sup>3</sup>

"The Kareans of Martaban are divided into two tribes termed respectively by them Kaphlungwa or 'the civilised' and asirang or the 'barbarous'. The latter are likewise termed by the Burmans Kayennee or 'red Karean'."

Meanwhile the British began to make contacts with the hill tribes of the Kaladan area to the North of Akyab and on the borders of Chittagong. These people are nowadays much neglected but might perhaps rate as "southern Chins." In

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1. Low (1) and (11). In modern Burmese Karen is written and pronounced ကရင် (Kayin)
  2. Scott (11), 121.
  3. Low (11)

the 1820s these hill people were known to the local Arakanese by a term romanised as khyan or khyan,<sup>1</sup> which later emerged as chin. Luce<sup>2</sup> has found the word in inscriptions of the 13th Century. He remarks "𑜋𑜧𑜨𑜫 " Khyan(Chin) without tonal marks has several senses in old Burmese and it is not easy to say if one of these is ethnic."

There seems to me no reason to doubt that this is the same word as that romanised as kayan in Martaban. It also appears to be the same as the word hkan by which the Shans refer to the Kachins, and the Kachins refer to the Magas and Chins. To translate it as "hill barbarian" is not going far astray.

In its sense of "Chin", it would probably have been extended by the British to all the hill peoples of the west side of Burma if it had not come up against the counter influence of the extension of the term "<sup>N</sup>Maga" from Assam. Just as khyan was the general Burmese term for "hill barbarian" the term naga (derived from the Hindustani nanga- naked)<sup>3</sup> was used indiscriminately in Assam along with the term Abor which seems to mean merely "hill man". In the literature of the 1840 period many of the people we now call Nagas were rated as Abors<sup>4</sup>, and I have already mentioned how the

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1. Grant (1); Fryer(1)
  2. Luce (iii)
  3. Smith (1), 167.
  4. Selection of Papers, 1873.



extension of the terms Chin and Naga clashed in the west of the Mwakung Valley as late as 1891.<sup>1</sup>

The limits of the extension of these various terms was largely fortuitous. The Karens possibly go no further north than they do because Karenni was the limit of British influence after the second Burmese war of 1853.

In point of fact the process of categorising the total field into its present elaborately subdivided pattern of "tribes and races" appears to have been a long term and somewhat haphazard process.

Crawford(1826)<sup>2</sup> refers only to "Karyans, Kyens, and other wild and unsettled races." Malcolm<sup>3</sup>, a missionary planner of 1839, has "Karens, Shyans, Tounghoos, Tawahs, Kas, Was, Selongs, Lowas, Eccabab-Kulas, Ques, Bongs, D'hanoos, Kadoos, Yaws, Engyees, Kyens, Paloungs, Kakhyens, Singphoos, Phwoons, Kantees." Most of these names are easy to recognise in modern Census lists. But Malcolm had a clear vested interest in enumerating as many subcategories as possible:-

Here then there are twenty six races of people in the Burman Empire and eighty in the immediate vicinity making a hundred and six. The subdivision of many of these into tribes speaking different dialects increases the number of distinct missions which demand to be commenced to about one hundred and twenty

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1. Norree(1)

2. Crawford (1), 465.

3. Malcolm (1) Vol II, 205

4. Ibid.

The official ethnographers of the day seem to have accepted this sort of thing without any undue caution. Bastian (1863)<sup>1</sup> writes of 101 Volksrassen in Burma alone.

The Burmese and Shans do not make all these fine distinctions.

The so-called "Riang tribes" who comprise a large proportion of the hill peoples of the central Shan plateau and speak dialects akin to Wa are known to the Burmese as yin and to the Shans as yang, both of which terms are equally applied to the "Karens" further south.<sup>2</sup>

The reader should realise that Burmese and Shan are essentially monosyllabic languages and the prefix ka- which occurs in many of these "tribal" labels is a qualifying term. According to Barnard it is essentially derogatory having the force of "slave". Thus the serfs of the Hkamti Shans were labelled ka-nung in distinction from the free Nung further east.<sup>3</sup> Ka-yin therefore is merely a derogatory form of yin; ka-chin, or ka-khyen as it was at first, is a derogatory form of chin. The present distinctions between these several terms have been devised by the Europeans, they did not exist in the original Burmese terminology.

The first recognisable reference to Kachins as people existing in North Burma occurs in a Burmese document dated 1623 and published by Burney in 1837.<sup>4</sup> The reference is to

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1. Bastian(1), 212.

2. Scott(11)141; See also Green (1), 246.

3. Barnard (11) Introduction vii.

4. Burney(1), 438.



"four hundred kakhyens and their chiefs," with a note to the effect that the country to the west of Bhamo was inhabited by "wild kakhyens". Richardson<sup>1</sup> about the same time, also by hearsay, but by ear rather than from a written document writes kaktchen, as descriptive of the hill tribes occupying North Hsenwi. Hannay travelling north from Ava in 1835 under Burney's instructions knew in advance that the hill tribes of the Bhamo area were kakhyen and writes of them as such. He also knew that the people of the Hukawng Valley were "Singfo" - since the Singpho (i.e. Jinghpaw) had already been met with some years before in Assam. Thus Hannay in his preliminary journal<sup>2</sup> writes of Kakhyen around Bhamo and Singfo around Mogaung and further north. Then in retrospect he recollects that the "Singpho" and the "Kakhyen" spoke the same language and seemed to have much the same culture so that in his final account<sup>3</sup> he writes of the "Singphos or Kakhyens", thus fixing the identity of "Kachin" with "Jinghpaw" and making a firm separation of Kakhyen - Kachin from Khyen-Karen or <sup>H</sup>Kyen-Chin. But not quite. It was only the "scientific" British who recognised these distinctions; all the "wild and woolly" peoples were still khyen for the Burmese. We have

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1. Richardson (1) 14th March 1837.

2. Hannay (1)

3. Hannay (11)



proof of this. Dr Mason the pioneer missionary among the Karens had concocted a remarkable history of the Karens which traced them back to the Gobi Desert!<sup>1</sup> With a view to implementing this story he visited Shamo in 1871 to try and find traces of former Karen habitations, and indeed it seems doubtful whether he regarded the "KaKhyens" and the Karens as in any way fundamentally distinct. Hanson admits that "Dr Mason in common with most scholars in those days, looked upon the Kachins as part of the Karen race" and quotes him as writing "There was not the slightest appearance of savages about them. On the contrary... I should say they were a good natured quiet people....had we seen them in British Burma we should have unhesitatingly pronounced them Karens."<sup>2</sup>

This I think clinches the argument that the threefold distinction Karen, Chin, Kachin is an arbitrary ad hoc classification with no basis either in local traditions or in "scientific" facts.<sup>3</sup> But who then are "the Kachins"?

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1. Scott (11), 120.

D.C. Gilmore thoroughly "debunked" this traditional history in an article in J.E.R.S. 1.p.191 but it was revived as late as 1922 by Marshall (1), p.6.

2. Hanson (vi), 146.

Original refer<sup>ences</sup> are A.B.M. Magazine Nov. 24 1873; Dec. 6 1873; Jan 30 1874.

We have it on no less an authority than Bastian that the Burmese considered the Kachins to be a species of Shan

Die mehrfach besprochenen Singphos sind, wie ich aus dem Munde mit ihnen wohl bekannter Birmesen weiss mit den Khamti identisch und gehören mit ihnen zur grossen Shan oder Tai Race. Die name Singpho bedeutet einfach Mensch.

Bastian op.cit p.22

3. Others have pointed out the probable linguistic connection between the terms Kachin, Chin and Karen, but I have seen no discussion of the evidence. See Green. (1)



On the whole Hannay's original identification of Kachin (Kakhyen) and Jinghpaw (Singpho) has persisted but with important modifications. Long before Hannay's time Neufville<sup>1</sup> had made an initial subdivision of Singphos into "Singphos proper" and "Kakus", the former being the people with whom Neufville was familiar in Assam and the latter "an inferior though not servile race" thought to live somewhere further east. Kaku (modern spelling Hkahku meaning "up river" as opposed to Hkanam "down river") is used colloquially by Southern Jinghpaw for the people of the Triangle.<sup>2</sup> The people of the South Triangle use it for the people of the North Triangle. The people of Assam a century ago appear to have used it for all members of the Jinghpaw kinship system who did not speak the local Singpho (i.e. Tsasen) dialect. Thus Hannay refers to the "Luttera (?Lahtaw La)Kakooes who are called Lessoo and came originally from the Chinese frontier"<sup>3</sup> who may well have been Lisu: further mentions the "Kakooes of the Mayrung or Mauroo tribe of the Squin Mae Kha".<sup>4</sup> The "Mauroo of the Squin Mae Kha" are certainly the "Maru of the N'mai Hka"! These are not usually rated as Jinghpaw. On the other hand other contexts show that Hannay's "<sup>4</sup>Marung" are the modern "Maran" a major clan of the Jinghpaw speaking group. Yet this cross identification is not necessarily a mistake; even today there are some Maran lineages which are Maru in speech and culture.

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1. Neufville (1), p. 340.

2. The term "Triangle" has an accepted geographical meaning as the area lying between the Mali Hka and N'mai Hka rivers which form the upper branches of the Irrawaddy.

3. Hannay (11) 7.

4. ibid p. 26



All this shows is that even Hannyay with his very limited knowledge of the total number of linguistic variants was unable to base his classification strictly on language. He was in effect forced to resort to a regional sub-classification (e.g. Mkaikku and N'mai Mka-Maru) even though he was confused as to what the regions were. It will be useful if we follow his example.

### Regional Subdivision of the Kachin Hills Area.

I propose to subdivide my geographically defined "Kachin Hills Area" into a number of subdivisions corresponding broadly to Jinghpaw ideas on the subject.<sup>1</sup>

- (i) Sinpraw Ga the "Eastern country." May be taken as comprising the whole of the area east of the Irrawaddy and south of the N'mai-Mali confluence.
- (ii) Mkaikku Ga the "up river country." I shall take this as including the whole of the Triangle and also the area between the Mali Mka (Upper Irrawaddy) and the Kumon Range. But see category (ix) below.
- (iii) Mtinanai Ga the "lowland country." I shall restrict this to the area south of Mogaung and west of the Irrawaddy. In Kachin colloquial it includes also the next two areas namely.
- (iv) The Jade Mines Area east of Kamaing and south of the Hukawng Valley and
- (v) The Hukawng Valley itself which actually consists of the upper reaches of the Chindwin River.
- (vi) Assam for our purposes is merely that portion of Assam that falls within the previously defined Kachin Hills Area.
- (vii) Nam Tamai. This is the Shan name for the N'mai Mka river previously mentioned, but, in unofficial administrative jargon, it has acquired the meaning of the whole area to the north east of the Triangle within the Burma border and north of the Mekh river I shall use it in this sense.
- (viii) Putao Area I shall use to describe the blank space on my map north of the Mkaikku Ga and between Assam and the Nam Tamai. It consists largely of the Shan States of Mkamti Long.

1. See MAP. 2.



- (ix) Htawngaw Area fills the gap between Sinpraw Ga to the south and Nam Tamai to the north. It is "the Maru Tract" east of the N'mai Hka. But since the cultural frontier, in so far as there is one, is not the river itself but the mountain ridge a few miles further west, I will include both banks of the N'mai Hka in the Htawngaw area and modify my Hkekhu Ga accordingly.

## MAP 2

The nine areas are shown on ~~the attached map~~, together with certain further subdivisions.

It must be clearly understood that in none of these areas, or subdivisions of areas, is there any marked cultural uniformity but the modal cultural pattern varies substantially from place to place. It is necessary to explain roughly what these variations are, using the usual ethnographic cultural labels. It will be simplest if we work from north to south.

Nam Tamai Every new traveller in this remote region has his own idea of how local group names should be transcribed and we have tales of Talongs, Didjous, Dalu, Loutsee, Lutse, Kiutse, Tangzir, Tcherrwang, Nung, Lisu etc., etc., etc. The altitudes are mostly extreme - 6000 feet and over; the inclines precipitous; the virgin forest often replaced by grass, at any rate in the places where the gradient permits cultivation; elsewhere in the valley bottoms a jungle of ferocious density. Culturally it is a fringe area between "Kachins" and "Lolos". The large number of subdivisions represent the cultural gradation. Kingston Ward<sup>1</sup> significantly remarks "as we went westward the Nungs grew more and more like Kachins." Economically existence is at a sparse subsistence level.

Putao Area In the vicinity of Putao a large grassland plain ideally suitable for wet rice cultivation. Supports a "Shan" population of very mixed ethnic type. Only a small proportion of the cultivable area is now worked. Economically conditions are easy:- but the malarial death rate is high. Neighbouring hill groups to the north are of Nung and Mishmi culture; to the south are the Duleng, of Kachin culture.



Assam. Conditions have totally changed during the past century owing to the development of the tea industry. Tea coolies apart, the plains of Upper Assam are thinly populated though very fertile. Malaria and Kalar Azar formerly induced a high death rate. The population was formerly "Assamese" broken up into a large number of sub-groups representing colonising infiltration from neighbouring Shan areas and from the local hill peoples. Hill peoples are classed as Daffla and Abor on the north, Mishmi on the East, Singpho on the south east, and Naga on the south. "Singpho" is Jinghpaw, and the people in question are Tsasen Kachins, speaking a dialect closely allied to that of the Duleng.<sup>1</sup>

Mukawng Valley A fertile plain capable of supporting a much higher population than it does at present. Formerly a Shan sub-state dependency of Mogaung. Present inhabitants mainly Kachin, those at the western end being Tsasen (Singpho) linked closely with the Kachins of Assam. Political economic and kinship links are maintained with the Nagas to the west. The valley has mineral resources of amber and gold and at one time was a source of wild rubber (*ficus elastica*).

Jade Mines Area The Jade mines in the hills west of Kamaing have been the main source of Chinese jade for the past two centuries. The mines are owned and worked by Kachins (Jinghpaw Marips); the trade is controlled by Chinese; and the Burmese government levies an excise on stone passing through Kamaing. Until 1940 the local Kachin paramount chief, the Kansai Duwa, possessed certain complicated but not clearly defined royalty rights. The position at the present time is obscure. The Kansai Duwa has long been surrounded by a court of Chinese and Shan advisers and his lineage has intermarried freely with local Shans for several generations. Though the economic position is very confused the general prosperity of Kachins in this area is normally high and the distinction between local Kachins and local Shans correspondingly slight. Wet rice is cultivated around Kamaing itself and the population rated as mixed Shan and Kachin.<sup>2</sup>

Mkasku Ga. Traditionally the original home of all Jinghpaw clans. The population is now mainly Jinghpaw with substantial blocks of Maru both near Sumbrabum and also in the Triangle. There are Shans in some wet rice areas in the South Triangle (e.g. Ningchangyang) and a few Lisu. In the North Triangle around Ngalang and Ktingnan conditions are exceptionally

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1. See also Chapter VI.

2. Hertz W.A.(1), R.N.E.F. annual references.



favourable for dry rice (taungya) cultivation and a regular annual surplus is produced. Normally this is traded to areas on the west of the Mali Mka, - formerly in exchange for salt.

Htawdaw Area The "original home" of the Maru. The terrain is similar to, though less severe than the Nam Tamai. A large number of mutually unintelligible dialects of a Mung-Marun type are spoken in different areas. Intrusive elements of Lisu and Lolo are classed either as Yawin or "Chinese". The Lashi in a cultural sense may be regarded as intermediate Maru-Chinese.

Htingnai Ga An area formerly dominated politically by the Shans of Mogaung and Mohnyin (Mong Yang). Today the hill peoples are rated as Jinghpaw and Atsi - the latter being an intermediate Jinghpaw-Marun grouping. Following the construction of the railway there was a large increase in the plains population which is mixed and polyglot being rated as Shan, Burmese, Yaw etc. Rice is exported by rail to the south. A sugar factory at Sahmaw has also improved the economic prospects of the district. The inhabitants of the southern part of this Htingnai area were known to the Burmese of the 13th Century as Kantu a word that appears to have developed into the modern Kadu.<sup>1</sup> The modern Kadu are very polyglot and non-descript, a general amalgam of Kachins, Chins, Nagas, Shans etc.<sup>2</sup> Taylor has asserted, on very obscure linguistic grounds, that they are "the descendants of an old Sak race", the Sak being a dialect group of a few hundred persons recorded from Arakan! The Kadus number some 50,000.<sup>3</sup>

Sinpraw Ga. This border country between Burma and China has long been of strategic and economic importance through its dominance over the trade routes between the two countries. In an agricultural sense the hill terrain is much less favourable, than that of the Htingnai, but the trade route factor has counterbalanced this. A small group, the Gauri, living in the hills east of Bhamo has an influence in Kachin affairs out of all proportion to its numbers. The modern Gauri possess this influence through their priority in acquiring mission schools, but they acquired this priority because already in 1850 the Gauri chiefs dominated the

1. Luce (111), 297.

2. Bennison (1), 187; Scott (11), Vol. 1. Pt. 1. 569, 575.

3. Taylor (1)



the whole Sinlum Hills area on account of the economically strategic situation of their territory.

Apart from the Gauri who are concentrated in a small area immediately east of Bhamo the hill population is very mixed. North of the Shweli the categories are all "Kachins" of one sort or another e.g., Jinghpaw, Atsi, Maru, Lashi, Lisu but south of the Shweli the Palaung are also prominent, though all the "Kachin" sub groups occur as well. In that portion of the territory that lies in China the distribution is similar though the proportion of "Lolo" sub-groups e.g., Lisu and Lahu (Moso) is higher than in British territory.

There is a substantial contrast in climate between the Sinpraw Ga and the areas further west and north. East of the Bhamo plain even the "plains" of the Sinpraw area mostly lie at altitudes of 3000 feet or over, yet the rainfall is moderate - about 80 inches - and similar to that of the Htidingnai area lying at a much lower altitude, and much less than that of the northern areas which have falls up to 170 inches. This contrast has a marked effect on the vegetation. Whereas west and north of the Sinlum Hills the jungle is everywhere of the fast growing tropical rain forest type; to the east pine and oak appear and the jungle loses much of its powers of recuperation. Over large parts of the Sinpraw area therefore the practice of shifting cultivation has converted the forest into grass downland.

The topographical environment is thus more varied than in the other areas and this is reflected in the large number of distinguishable "cultures" observed by the ethnographers. The wet rice growers of the valley bottoms are again Shans; the dry rice cultivators are generally "Kachins"; the tea growing specialists are "Palaungs"; and the peoples of the hill tops above the rice growing level "Lisu".

It would be satisfactory if I could round off this description of the varied cultural composition of the different parts of the area with some statistical summary of the numbers of population involved. This however is impossible. Large parts of the relevant area were not enumerated at the last published Census (1931).



The following unofficial figures for Kachins only are based on unpublished records of the 1941 Census given to me by Mr. J.L. Leyden

Mogaung and Kamaing Townships	71,000
Myitkyina Township	38,000
Sadon Kachin Hill Tracts (including portion of old Myitkyina Kachin Hill Tracts)	26,000
Htagaw Area including East Triangle and Htaglang	28,000
Kamaing Kachin Hill Tracts including old Mogaung Hill Tracts	34,500
Hukawng Valley	7,500
Sinlum Hills	49,000
Shwegu Hill Tracts	2,700
Rhame district miscellaneous	2,300
Northern Shan States	80,000
Nam Tawai and Putao	40,000
	<hr/>
	379,000

It would appear however that the first two entries in this list must include a large proportion of non-Kachins and I doubt if there are more than 300,000 persons in Burma who could properly be rated as Kachin. The Northern Shan States figures do not include the Tawngpeng Palaung.

The Singpho speakers in the Assam area possibly number a further 5,000. No reasonable estimate of the Kachins in Chinese territory can be made. I myself would suggest that 30,000 is an outside estimate.

No satisfactory figures can be given for the non-Kachin population of the area as a whole. The non-Kachin population

of the Bhamo district only appears to be about 75,000.

The area of greatest population concentration in the hills is in the Sinlum area - 27 to the square mile. Very palpable erosion results from this concentration and there seems to have been some decline of population in this area over the past 40 years. The residential densities in other parts of the hills seem usually to be 15 to the square mile or less; but since these averages are mostly taken over very large blocks of territory they have little significance.

Of my 9 sub-areas, Assam "has generally speaking been administered by the British since 1830; The Sinpraw, Ntinanai the Jade Mines and the southern part of the Hkahku lying to the west of the Mali Hka since 1890; the southern part of the Utawgaw area and Putao since 1910; the Nam Tamai since about 1914; the Sumprabum portion of the Hkahku since about 1912 and the Triangle and the Hukawng Valley (very tentatively) since 1926.<sup>1</sup> In the areas which have only recently come within the orbit of British administration the obvious indications of western influence are naturally much less in evidence than elsewhere. However since the Hukawng Valley and the Triangle were the scene of major military operations between 1942-45, this generalisation probably no longer hold good.

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1. See Various R.N.E.F.



Non-coincidence of "Region" "Economic Type" and "Culture."

Two points are to be noted particularly from this very general description of the area and its population. In the first place there is no topographical uniformity in any part of the area. In each of my sub-divisions there are areas where wet rice cultivation is feasible, others where only dry rice cultivation is feasible and others where neither is feasible. But the proportions vary. In the Nam Tamai there are only a few minute pockets where wet rice can be grown at all, and dry rice is everywhere poor; in the Hkahku, most land is fit for dry rice, but not much for wet cultivation; in the Hukawng the space for wet cultivation is ample. The second point is that since, in an overt ethnographic sense, the cultural confusion is very great, it is clearly not in terms of fixed "cultures", that unifying principles pertaining to the whole area can be expressed.

I propose then to use the term "Kachin" as descriptive of the hill peoples of the whole Kachin Hills Area as I have described it, and then to examine what unifying principles, if any, do run through such a group. We shall in point of fact discover at least two such principles. One is that the Jinghpaw Kinship system spreads throughout the whole area, and the other that the structural principles underlying local political organisation in all areas is the same. The only respect in which this wide use of the

term Kachin conflicts with general Burma administrative practice is that it rather tentatively includes many of the Palaungs of North Hsenwi.

### The Shans of the Kachin Hills.

We now need to consider in more detail the "plains" element in the non-Kachin population of the area we have defined as "The Kachin Hills Area." These people I label Shan, but it is most important that the reader should recognise a somewhat ambivalent meaning in this term. It is necessary to distinguish between Shan as a label for a "quasi-group" of people living dispersed over a wide area but possessing a general similarity of culture and social organisation, and Maw Shan the name of the politically dominant group in an historical state or confederation of states.

It is a coincidence, - whether or not significant I am not prepared to say -, that the "Kachin Hills Area", as I have defined it, corresponds closely with the historical political boundaries of the maw Shan confederation. The problem of just who the maw Shans were, where they came from and what became of them, has been the subject of much discussion.<sup>1</sup> All I intend to do here is to pick out certain salient - and more or less undisputed - facts.

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1. See especially Pemberton (1); Elias (1); Parker (1 and 11); Scott (vi); Cochrane (1); Cushing (1); Harvey (1)



Between the 9th and 13th Centuries A.D. there was a political centre of considerable power and influence centred somewhere in the region of Tali-fu<sup>1</sup> which was known to the Chinese as Nan-Chao. For the most part it was independent of, and hostile to, the Chinese of the T'ang and Sung dynasties and for this reason the Chinese routes to India by way of Bhamo and Manipur, which were well known before the 8th century A.D., fell into disuse.<sup>2</sup> The extent of Nanchao influence is not definitely known, but it is surmised on the basis of various Shan chronicles that a number of the leading Northern Shan States had already been established and were linked with Nanchao in some form of political confederation. Shan chronicles and stories recorded from Manipur, Assam, Hkamti Long, Hsenwi, and Mōng Mao all show sufficient concordance to demonstrate conclusively that they are based on a common source. The story they present is that the various Shan States of the northern area e.g., Mōng Mao, Hsenwi, Mogaung, Ahom (Assam), Hkamti, Mōng Hsa, Mōng Ti, Mōng La, etc., etc., are "descended from" Mōng Mao, that is to say the ruling families of these various states are represented as off shot lineages of the ruling family of Mōng Mao. This kinship, even if fictitious, is still recognised. Even in 1943 I was told in Hkamti Long that the leading families came originally from Mōng Mao. The

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1. Luce<sub>s</sub> (11) 269 says Nan-Chao was further south at Mōngchē east of Yungchang (Pao-Shan)

2. Pelliot (1)



actual location of Mōng Mao seems however to have shifted from time to time. Mōng Mao means "country of the māo (also written mai or maw)" maw being probably in the first place a lineage name of the ruling group of a small state. But the "Shans" like the "Xachins" tend to take their place names with them when they establish new settlements. Pemberton, writing in 1835, identified Mongmao-rung the legendary capital of "the Kingdom of Pong as Mogaung, and was probably more correct than those who later tried to shift Pong into the Shweli area on the ground that the only Mōng Mao now known is in that area. In the 13th Century, in Marco Polo's time, the political centre seems to have been east of the Salween at Pao Shan (Yung Chang). At later dates the modern Mōng Mao, Hsenwi and Mogaung were each of dominant importance at different periods.

The 13th Century is (for the historians) the period of Shan political expansion; this expansion synchronises in a curious way with the overthrow of Nanchao by the Mongols. It is possibly significant that Nanchao was not destroyed in the usual drastic Mongol method, but peacefully annexed.<sup>1</sup> Very shortly afterwards we hear of "Shans" carrying out an invasion of Burma in accordance with Chinese (i.e., Mongol) instructions.<sup>2</sup> The most likely explanation of a confusing

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1. H. H. Howorth (1) 212 "They then marched against Tali, the capital of Nanchao. Having heard that a general of the Sung dynasty had once taken a town without killing a man or even disturbing its trade Khubilai was piqued to try and imitate him. He unfurled his silken banners before the town and forbade his soldiers to kill anyone. Presently the town surrendered. The date was 1253 A.D. (I.T.O. for note 2.)



set of facts is that prior to the appearance of the Mongols Nanchao exercised a loose feudal ascendancy over all the "Shan States" lying between the Mekong and the Chindwin north of latitude 24N. The Mongols then annexed Nanchao but preserved to some extent the feudal structure of the confederacy. The dominant and expansive political role then assumed by the "may Shans" was probably achieved through the alliance and patronage of the Mongols.

The most important overt residual consequence of this Mongol incursion was the establishment in Yunnan of a strong Mohammedan influence which resulted in the mid nineteenth century in the "Panthay Rebellion" to which passing references will be made in the course of this book. Just what was the lasting cultural influence of the Mongols upon the Shans it is impossible to say.

There are indications that, with or without military interference from the Burmese, the various Shan political groupings were highly unstable and the various "States" seem to have varied greatly in size and influence from time to time. Taking as a datum line the early 18th Century - (i.e., before the resurgence of the Burmese under Alaungpaya)- the grouping of the various states was approximately as follows.

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(Note 2 from page 70) Cochrane(1) p.23. "In A.D.1284 a Shan army, with the connivance of the Chinese, swooped on New Pagan and captured it." Parker contends that "the whole of the Shan sawbwaships included between Manipur and Annam were nominally subject to the mongol dynasty of China during the reign of Kublai Khan."



Group 1.

Hsenwi (Theinni) - included nearly the whole of the modern Northern Shan States in British Burma but Hsipaw, Hsuhhsai, Tawngpeng (Palaung), Kokang (Chinese), Mōng Lon (Wa), Mōng Si ("Kachin") etc., existed as sub states within the whole with varying degrees of independence. Mōng Mit (Momeik) owing to its close connection with the ruby mines of Mogoke was probably always more closely linked with Burma proper than Hsenwi.

Group 2.

Mōng Mao - the modern state immediately across the China border in the Shweli valley is the residue of a more powerful confederation. At the height of its power Mōng Mao was known to the Burmese as Kawsempi, a name taken over from Buddhist writings and really a centre of Buddhist learning in western India near Gandhara. Later Burmese took this as being Ko-sam-pyi - "nine Shan tribes" - so that various lists of nine names appear. How far they were really federated we do not know. They included:

Tungchang (Pao Shan) Mōng Men (Momen, Tengyueh), Mōng Yi, Mōng Shih, Mōng Na, Mōng La, Mōng Hsa, Mōng Wan, Mōng Pan. Broadly speaking the area concerned is the Shweli Valley north of Namkham and the Taping Valley east of Manyun, with a section of the area between the Mekong and the Salween. The whole region was nominally subject to China, - though only by remote control.

Group 3.

Mōng Kawng (Mogaung) which with its dependencies comprised most of modern Burma north of Katha was in theory a Chinese dependency. It is probable that the increasing importance of the Jade mines east of Kamsing induced both the Burmese and the Chinese to show an increasing interest in this area during the latter part of the 18th Century. The Chinese invasions of Burma during the period 1760-1780 were partly designed to defend the Mogaung provinces from the Burmese. At the end of these wars the territory was ceded to the Burmese but the latter continued to pay a tribute to the Chinese in respect of these northern areas.<sup>1</sup> The Chinese still make claims on this whole area. At this time the Mogaung Sawbwa was an important Prince allegedly having under him 99 subordinate mōng;<sup>2</sup> these seem to have fallen into four groups:- (a) Townships on the Irrawaddy

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1. Luce (1)
  2. Elias (1)



between Bhamo and Myittha (Waingmaw), (b) Townships in what is now known as the railway corridor as far south as Wundwin, (c) Townships on the Chinthe, including the Hukawng Valley and as far south as Kalewa. (d) Petty states in the extreme north around Putao.

This Kingdom seems to have been known to the Manipuris and the Burmese as Fong and to the Assamese as Nora.<sup>1</sup> The Lisu of the China border still refer to Hkanti Long as apon.<sup>2</sup>

After the Burmese victory over the Chinese, the Mogaung Sawbwa was replaced by a Burmese Governor, and Bhamo and Mohnyin separated off as separate Governorships. The outlying townships in the Chinthe and in the north continued to function more or less independently of the Burmese but in the course of time became increasingly dependent upon Kachin patronage.

Throughout the 19th Century the Jade mines forged an important source of revenue for the Burmese crown.<sup>3</sup>

#### Group 4.

Assam. The Ahom (Shan) kingdom in Assam seems to have been founded in the 13th Century as a colony either of Mogaung or Mong Mao. The Ahoms gradually adopted Hindu styles and became "Assamese". But political relations with Mogaung and Hkanti continued. There seems to have been persistent small scale colonisation by Shans from east to west. Early in the 19th Century there were a number of Shan groups in Eastern Assam all in process of "becoming" Assamese. These are known to the literature as Phakeal, Aitonia, Khampiti (Hkanti), Nora etc. Further details of these are given in Chapter VI.

It seems reasonably clear that all these various "Shan States" had a general similarity of political structure. This structure was segmentary in type and based on an ideology of common kinship between the various rulers concerned.

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1. Pemberton(1) Buchanan (1).
  2. Orleans (1)
  3. Kertx W.A.(1)



This "Shan" political structure of the plains people is not in essence very different from the "Kachin" political structure of the hill peoples. There seems no legitimate ground for postulating a common ethnic origin for the various Shan groups. There is a general cultural similarity in terms of technological equipment and economic organisation, but even here the variations of detail are substantial. Linguistically the experts assert that all the Shan languages are connected dialects, but they are certainly not mutually intelligible. In religion the Ahom were apparently originally "animist" and later became Hindu.<sup>1</sup> The Shans of the Mogaung group are Buddhists of the Burmese persuasion; the Shans of Heenwi are Buddhists of various sects, some being of the Burmese pattern and others of the Chinese pattern; the Shans of the Mong Mao group are generally speaking Buddhists of the Chinese pattern - though this version of the Mahayana differs from that found in other parts of China.

Such unity as exists between these various states is to be found in their traditions of common origin, and in the similarity of the economic relations existing between each group of plains people and their hill neighbours. The Shans recognise their unity as Tai in terms of their

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1. Gait (1)



contrast with the hillmen - Nkang.

In every case the Shan political centres are located in rice plain areas capable of producing more rice than is immediately required by the local plains population. Since the hill peoples are generally short of rice the Shans of the plains can use their rice surplus as a political lever with which to keep the hill people under control. This applies even when overtly the Shans have lost their political ascendancy.

When the British first entered Burma the power of the Shan Princes had been destroyed by Burmese intrigue and military action. The hill peoples then assumed an ascendant political position, being commonly regarded by the plainmen as bandits. In a large proportion of cases the actual modus vivendi seems to have been quite peaceful. The Kachins of the hills "protected" the Shans of the plains and received compensation ("blackmail") for this service, often in the form of rice.<sup>1</sup>

It needs to be emphasised also that many of the localities where Shans are now found are small pockets of alluvial valley high in the mountains closely surrounded by hills. The colonisation of such localities could never have been undertaken except with the active or tacit agreement of

th. the hill peoples are generally short of rice the Shans of the plains can use their rice surplus as a political lever with which to keep the hill people under control. This applies even when overtly the Shans have lost their political ascendancy.

1. Williams (1); Strettell (1)

annexation all such isolated Shan areas were politically subordinate to neighbouring Kachin chiefs; there is no reason to suppose that this was not a long standing arrangement of considerable stability. Even when the Shan groups of the larger plains areas were dominant over neighbouring Kachins, it is still possible that these Kachins themselves were dominant over isolated pockets of Shans within their territory.

If my interpretation of the term Shan be accepted, then the view that, in the past, the Shans have been "driven out of the hills by the savage Kachins" must be abandoned. "Shan culture" as we now understand it is not adapted to living in the high mountains, but only in the valley bottoms. If anyone was driven out of the mountains by the Kachins, then at that time, the people so driven were not Shans.

#### Cultural differentiation: Summary

To sum up this argument about cultural differentiation within the Kachin Hills Area. We have, a large number of groups which can be defined by the ethnographer as distinct cultures - on the basis of technological distinctions such as language, dress, technical equipment etc. Paradoxically however, in the consideration of cultural change, such differentiation of the continuum into a large number of discrete units is misleading. The differences between "one culture" and "another culture" in this ethnographic sense are



superficial; structurally there appears to be no sharp boundaries of society anywhere in the area and there is no obvious reason why members of one culture group should not on occasion transfer themselves into another. Whether in fact they do so or not is a matter for investigation.

Nevertheless despite this general continuum of social activity the dichotomy between Kachin and Shan is based on firmer sociological grounds than a simple economic differentiation between hill people and plains people. Two great kinship systems pervade the whole area, one that of the Jinghpaw, the other that of the may Shans; in places the two systems overlap or become confused, and both systems ramify in tenuous form beyond the strict geographical boundaries of the Kachin Hills Area. Both systems represent putative rather than genealogically defined linkages between widely separated groups. For the rest of this book these terms "Kachin" and "Shan" represent these contrasted systems rather than any particular hereditarily or culturally defined "people."

Contrast of concept of a cultural continuum with accented theories of "racial" diversity and migration.

The concept of a cultural continuum in which apparently discrete cultural groups merge into one another at all "points of contact" is fundamental to my whole approach; it is necessary to consider the features of this concept which conflict with the conventional view which regards the present distribution of peoples in Burma as the residual consequence of past historical migrations.

All standard reference books without exception take the view that in the Burma Area the diversity of language and overt custom, can be explained as the historical result of a mixture of races brought about by a process labelled migration. Even Stevenson, despite his anthropological training repeats the popular view in his recent pamphlet.<sup>1</sup>

"In ancient days the whole of north Burma and a large part of Southern Burma were vast wildernesses of almost uninhabited forest country, an immense "Eldorado" waiting for colonization and therefore quite naturally the envy of more populous neighbour states. The existence of these empty spaces facilitated large migrations, from the earliest known times, out of the mountainous territory on the north into Burma proper."

The view put forward by Bennison in the 1931 Census<sup>2</sup> is typical of the literature as a whole

"According to Major Davies the Burmese came down the Eastern branch on the Irrawaddy and the Atais, Lashis, Marus and Hpons are the stragglers left behind in the southerly migrations of the main body of the race. The original migration of these tribes was apparently impeded by the Shan invasion from the East.

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1. Stevenson (v), 1.

2. Bennison (1), 181; cf. Marshall (1), 12; Enríquez (1v)



In short the present linguistic distribution is explained by the postulate of a series of "waves" of population emerging in strange cormucopia fashion out of some fabulous fountain head somewhere in the recesses of Tibet. It is important that the entirely hypothetical nature of this line of argument be fully appreciated.

I am not questioning that movements that might fairly be labelled "migrations" have actually taken place within the area with which we are concerned, even within recent historical times; but these movements have been very limited in scope and have not had the characteristics of the massive Volkerwanderungen of theory.

Migrations are a deus ex machina which is supposed to explain why groups on the ground display a bewildering diversity of language; the explanation takes the form that the groups in question all originally came from the same place and after emerging from their ur-heimat conveniently distributed themselves about the map into the positions we now find them, each migration wave representing the cluster of present day languages which on philological grounds are deemed to be closely related. Why the language of the people of the urheimat should change so rapidly that each wave is quite unlike the next, while the languages of the groups after they have split up are deemed, relatively speaking, not to change at all, is not explained!



My quarrel with the "migration theory" is that it fails to explain the facts. The readiness with which the cultural attribute of language can be either acquired or discarded has long been well established from other fields, and in the Burma area was being stressed by Grant-Brown in the early years of this century.<sup>1</sup> More recently Green<sup>2</sup> has developed in detail a criticism of the whole language-race identification, but in doing so has abandoned neither the concept of race itself nor the theory of migrations. Green's remarks are worth quoting at some length:

"Up to the present language has been the only basis of classification of the races and tribes of Burma. Linguistic evidence....has led to many errors of racial classification. A linguistic connection definitely proves only a contact between the races or the ancestors of the races in question, or a contact between them and a third race. Language however does give us a hint regarding the probable migration of races, as the migration of people and cultural waves are normally inclined to follow the paths of least resistance which are so often the paths of language affinities.

Some of the races <sup>or</sup> tribes of Burma change their language almost as often as they change their clothes. Languages are changed by conquest, by absorption, by isolation, and by a general tendency to adopt the language of a neighbour who is considered to belong to a more powerful, more numerous or more advanced race or tribe.....

The unreliability of the language test for race has again become apparent in this Census. Atsio, Lashio and Marus appear to have decreased whereas it is more probable that they have declared themselves as Kachins. the Khamti Shans who have migrated to Myitkyina have declared themselves as Shans. Many small tribes of

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1. Brown (G.E.R.C.) (11) Chapter 2; also idem(1).
  2. Green (1)



the Shan States are recorded as Shans.....The classification of the indigenous races has been further complicated as the names now applied to them are not their own names but those given to them by their neighbours.....The words Kachin, Chin and Karen appear to be derived from three different pronounciations of the original Burmese word for the Hill Tribes Kakhyen....

The muddle headedness of Green's viewpoint is immediately apparent. The latter part of his argument in itself demolishes altogether the view that any discrete "races" or "tribes" are involved. But if there are no permanently discrete races there is no need to postulate any complicated theory of migrations to account for the supposed racial differences!

The migration theory is of considerable antiquity - it was for example already well established by 1845<sup>1</sup> - but the only evidence on which it rests is a synthesis and interpretation of "local tradition", plus the pseudo logical argument that any "people" that is not autochthonous must have "come from somewhere." Once it is appreciated that cultural characteristics are readily acquired and discarded and in no sense "racial", then the logical need for "an original home" disappears. But the old idea dies hard.

In this book I am not concerned with the original ancestors of the present inhabitants of the Kachin Hills Area. All these inhabitants whether they be labelled Nung, Kachin,  
1. Prichard (1), 250.

Shan, Falaung or anything else appear to be of similar racial stock. It is a very confused and "impure" racial stock, just as is that of the British Isles or any part of the continent of Europe, and the mixture is not homogeneous. The racial type varies regionally - the North Hsenwi man differs from the Hukawng Valley man or from the Nam Tamai man, but such significant variations as do exist do not correspond to cultural contrasts. Racially the Shan, the Falaung, the Jinghpaw, the Atsi, the Maru, the Lashi are all indistinguishable. The criterion of distinction upon which Green and others think they can distinguish the different racial types, which they assert exist, rest upon hairstyle, dress and similar irrelevant characteristics.

In this book then we are concerned with the people of a particular geographical area regardless of what language they speak, what clothes they wear, or how they dress their hair.



### The Kachin House and Settlement.

In addition to purely personal attributes, such as language and dress, popular cultural categorisation also largely turns on types of house and settlement. It is thought that the "tribe" or "race" of a man may be determined from the type of house and village that he lives in.

In the Burma field this provides a broader and on the whole more useful type of categorisation than the criterion of language, for it is true that both dwelling and form of settlement correlate closely with fundamentals of economic and general social organisation.

In the next Chapter I shall give a description of a modal form of Kachin social structure, presenting it as the type form of social structure over a much wider area. In doing so I shall refer constantly to the elements of Kachin territorial grouping:- households, villages, village clusters, tracts. It is necessary that the reader have a reasonably clear mental picture of what is implied.

"The Kachin House" has been described by several ethnographers in considerable detail<sup>1</sup>; the concordance between these several accounts is somewhat deceptive. Kachin houses are not in fact standardised.

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1. Especially Gilhodes 111; Schermann 1; Wehli 11.

In the Burma-Assam Area as a whole two major species of dwelling occur.

The "Chinese" Assamese, and most of the "Lisu" - "Lolo" groups build their houses with the floor at earth level. The walls are of a bamboo wattle reinforced with a mud and lime plaster. Individual houses are small and usually contain one family only, but the settlement often develops somewhat on honeycomb lines, with rows of closely connected houses and intervening streets, courtyards, and vegetable gardens. It is probable that the ground plan of the total settlement has a correlation with the kinship and authority status of the individual component families one with another.

The "Burmese" and most of the Chin, Naga, Wa, Karen and Kachin groups build "platform dwellings", that is buildings in which the floor level is raised several feet from the ground. Most of these buildings are also, at ground level, livestock stalls, and the detail design varies in different localities according as to whether the human living quarters project over the stabling or is placed alongside it.<sup>1</sup> In the latter case a simple family will clearly require a much longer house than in the former.

It is a symptom of the culturally diverse composition of the so called "Shan race" that while the Shans of Burma mostly build platform dwellings; many of those in China and

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1. See Kaufmann p.69.; Schermann op.cit.



some of those in Assam build the ground level type.

So far as the Kachin Hills Area is concerned all the inhabitants build platform type dwellings except some of the Lisu and the Shan-Chinese on the eastern fringe and the Assamese at the extreme north west. In external superficial appearance there is a contrast between the Shan and Kachin type, but detailed studies by Schermann<sup>1</sup> reveal the essential structural similarity of the two forms, neither of which are at all standardised.

At the level of the poor class commoner the house is much the same whether the inhabitant is Shan or Kachin. It is a rectangular building 10 or 15 yards long with a single straight ridge pole forming the roof gable. There is a door at each end and the interior is partitioned off into two or more compartments each with a separate hearth. Livestock are stabled underneath the living quarters, but whereas the ordinary Kachin house can only accommodate pigs and chickens in this manner, the Shan house is raised higher to accommodate plough cattle and farm implements.

At an aristocratic and wealthier level the Kachin and Shan types diverge, - quite apart from regional variations. The Shan ideal is a palace (haw) the structural themes of which tend to elaboration in roof design on the basis of a

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1. Schermann (1)

square ground plan. The basic themes appear to be Burmese and are found alike in Royal palaces and Buddhist monasteries. The Kachin ideal on the other hand is the chief's house (htingnu) in which the simple rectangular theme is retained, but the length greatly exaggerated by the inclusion of a substantial forecourt under the porch of the main roof, and a general increase in the massiveness of the main porch posts.

Some Kachin chief's houses are very long; buildings up to 100 yards in length have been reported, and this has led to a misinterpretation of their social function. Certain Karen groups in the Pegu Yomas have true "long houses" which are in effect self contained communities<sup>1</sup>; a pattern that is repeated among the Senoi of Malaya and the Dyaks of Borneo. This form of community dwelling is not the Kachin norm, even when all the members of a "village" (gahlawng) are close kin.

The length and post dimensions of a Kachin's house are a direct symbol of prestige. The largest house in any settlement is that of the headman or chief; it serves to some extent as the guest house, general club house and court house of the whole community, and thus fulfills certain of the functions of the Naga morung.<sup>2</sup> In former times when slavery was recognised, the slaves were nearly all the technical property of the headman and lived in his house. Nowadays

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1. Marshall (1)

2. Furer Haimendorf (1)



although this long house still often appears to be very crowded it is normally the actual dwelling house only of the headman himself and his immediate kinsfolk.

Modern Census figures show that the densities of population per house are steady between 4 and 5 for all parts of the Kachin Hills and these figures have been unchanged since the first Census observations in 1891.<sup>1</sup> This clearly demonstrates that the modal form of household organisation is the simple family plus one or two direct dependents.

This does not imply that the size of the house is unimportant. On the contrary a large house and the possession of massive perch poles is a crucial symbol of prestige, since it is proof of the kinship and political authority of the owner. A man's kin or a chief's political adherents are under obligation to help him build his house; they must supply not only labour but timber and thatch. In former times an influential chief could call upon kinsfolk and allies living hundreds of miles distant to send help of this kind. But since he must feed whatever labour force he assembled, he could not build beyond the capacity of his real economic resources. Carraplett's analysis is correct in this instance

"The importance and standing of a Kachin is determined by the number of jan (fire-places)... which he has installed in his house. A poor man may have two or three

1. George (1), p.vii

dap in a house fifty or sixty feet in length. A well to do man may have ten or more dap in a house from 150 to 200 feet long."<sup>1</sup>

The distinction I have here drawn between large houses as <sup>y</sup> symbols of prestige and large houses as the dwelling places of an aggregate of near kin is of some importance for the understanding of the argument put forward in the next chapter. I shall there show that the various sizes of local community into which Kachin settlements tend to form themselves can be analysed down into a number of structurally similar segments of different scale dimensions. The smallest of all such segments is the individual household; the next largest which I call a "village" (Kachin sahtawng) is a group of houses, clustered fairly compactly, numbering anything from two to say 40 houses. The households of such a group, as I shall show, are kindred - some of them being related through common lineage ties with the headman of the village, others being related directly or indirectly through affinal connections with that lineage. It may be that some of these households comprise not merely simple families, but are to some extent extended families. An example that I recollect is a man, his wife and two married sons and their wives, a daughter of the elder son, a widow of the householder's deceased elder brother and a grandchild of the latter, making

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1. Carraplett (1) p.12.



a household of 9, including three children. But such a group does not proliferate as a single household indefinitely. The elder of the two married brothers in this case intended shortly to set up house on his own either in the same village, or more probably in a similar village belonging to slightly more distantly related members of the same lineage.

This unit of settlement which I call "a village" is, as a rule, clearly observable as discrete; that it is to say it is usually set apart at some distance from other similar villages which jointly comprise what I call a "village cluster" (mareng). In extreme cases the component villages of a single village cluster may be several miles apart, a fact which has led to a good deal of confusion on large scale survey maps; but in other extreme cases component villages may appear to coalesce so that to the uninitiated there is no obvious boundary between one "village" and the next.

This variation in the density of aggregation of the component elements of community dwelling has relevance for my general comparative material.

Among the Nagas, China, Abors and Was the immediately obvious unit of settlement (called "a village" in the literature) is commonly much larger than anything found among the Kachins. The Angami Naga centre of Kohima at one time contained over 300 houses; "villages" of 300 houses are common.

Such settlements almost invariably contain ward segments - usually called khel in the Naga literature. Further subdivisions of such khel are sometimes termed ihat. An ambiguity in the use of these terms so as to denote either (a) an exogamous lineage, or (b) a settlement segment, is commented upon in a later chapter. My point here is that if comparison is to be made between the Naga material and my own Kachin analysis then the Naga "village" corresponds to my Kachin "village cluster", or even to the Kachin "tract" (mung), the political unit comprising several village clusters. The comparable unit to my Kachin "village" in general scale is what writers on the Nagas refer to as a khel or a ihat<sup>1</sup>:

Reversing the argument this brings out the facts that "village" and "village cluster" are similarly constituted structural arrangements of different segmentary scale.

#### Kachin Chief's House: Ground Plan

Diagram 1 represents the ground plan of a fairly average type of Kachin Chief's house. The internal arrangements are not standardised, nor are the names by which the various features are known. Thus for example the Madai dan (7) may be in the middle of the house instead of at the front end the position of the household nat shrine (11) varies according to the customs of different lineages. There may be more

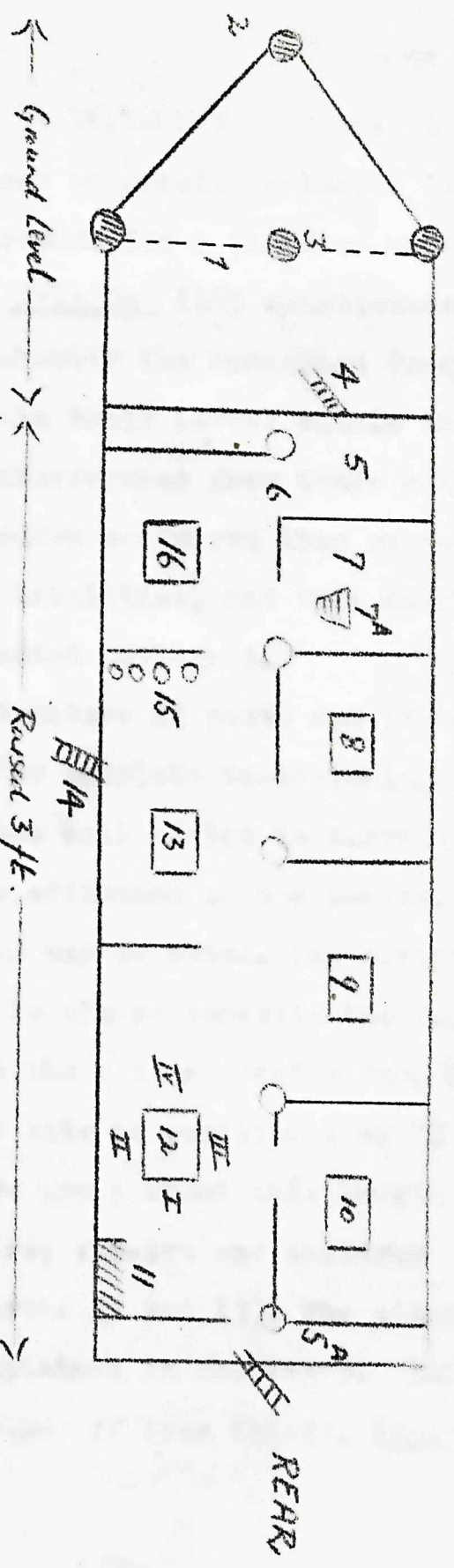
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1. Furness (1), 447/8.



Diagram 1.

GROUND PLAN OF A KACHIN CHIEF'S HOUSE MODIFIED FROM SCHEENMAN & GILLMOORE



- |                    |                 |                         |             |
|--------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| 1. Porch & stable  | H'PAN           | 11. Rear Verandah       | Mat         |
| 2. Front House     | Post JIN SHADAN | 12. Household net       | Mat         |
| 3. Porch House     | Post H'HPU-DAN  | 13. Guest hearth        | SHANAN DAP  |
| 4. Entrance Ladder | LAXANG          | 14. Cook house          | LUP DAN DAP |
| 5. Verandah        | H'PAW           | 15. Side entrance       | RAP DAN DAP |
| 6. Door            | CHYINONKA       | 16. Water tubes         | SHAT SHADU  |
| 7. Bridal net      | MAOAI DAP       | 17. Unmarried daughters | DAP         |
| 8. Shrine room     | KARAP TAN       |                         | HEUNAWT H'K |
| 9. Metal shrine    | KAPRAH DAP      |                         | WISIN H'DUN |
| 10. Married son    | DAP TREN        |                         | H'LA DAP    |
| 11. Children       |                 |                         |             |
| 12. Parents        |                 |                         |             |
|                    | H'NANG DAP.     |                         |             |

than one side entrance (14), or there may be none. The ground level porch area (1) may be greatly enlarged in some cases, so that it may account for a third or more of the total roof length. The Hila Dan (16) constitutes an institutionalised arrangement whereby the unmarried daughters of the household may entertain their lovers within the household precincts without interference from their elders. Under missionary and other modern pressures this custom is tending to disappear in most localities, and this hearth is often omitted in newly erected buildings.

Once erected the main structure of posts and framework is a permanency; but partial or complete re-thatching and replacement of the split bamboo wall plates is carried out at intervals according to the affluence of the owners.

Some features of the plan may be noted. The sleeping apartment of the owners (10) is always opposite the guest hearth (12), concerning which there is a precise form of manners. The Honoured guest sits in position I or II and not in III or IV. When guests are present this hearth is more or less reserved for males; females and children cluster round the cooking hearths (9 and 13). The significance of the madai nat shrine is explained in Chapter 3. This feature only occurs in the houses of true Chiefs, (Maayi sha ai du).



Hpalang Village Cluster: Sketch Map.

From time to time I shall refer for evidence to my own experience at the village cluster of Hpalang in the Sinlum Hills close to the China border, east from Bhamo. The whole of my Hpalang research material was lost as a result of military operations in 1942. Diagram 2 is therefore drawn from recollection; it indicates merely the general distribution of the houses.

The total settlement is dispersed throughout the length of a long straight ridge about 2 miles long which in most places sheers away steeply on either side. The crest of the ridge itself shows a fall of about 700 feet over the two miles. Altitude at the top of the village cluster, (i.e. at Xawung 1) is about 5,500 feet.

The natural vegetation is tropical rain forest verging on the lower slopes into open grassland. Almost the whole of the forest land is cleared periodically in a cycle of shifting cultivation. The cycle of rotation is at present too rapid for satisfactory recovery of the jungle growth and the grassland is gaining steadily at the expense of the forest. The grassland also is cultivated on a shifting system. Considerable areas of terraced and irrigated rice land exist in the valley of the Nam Wan about 2,000 feet below Gumjye (9), parts of which are worked by the inhabitants of Hpalang.

Line of  
Ridge Crest

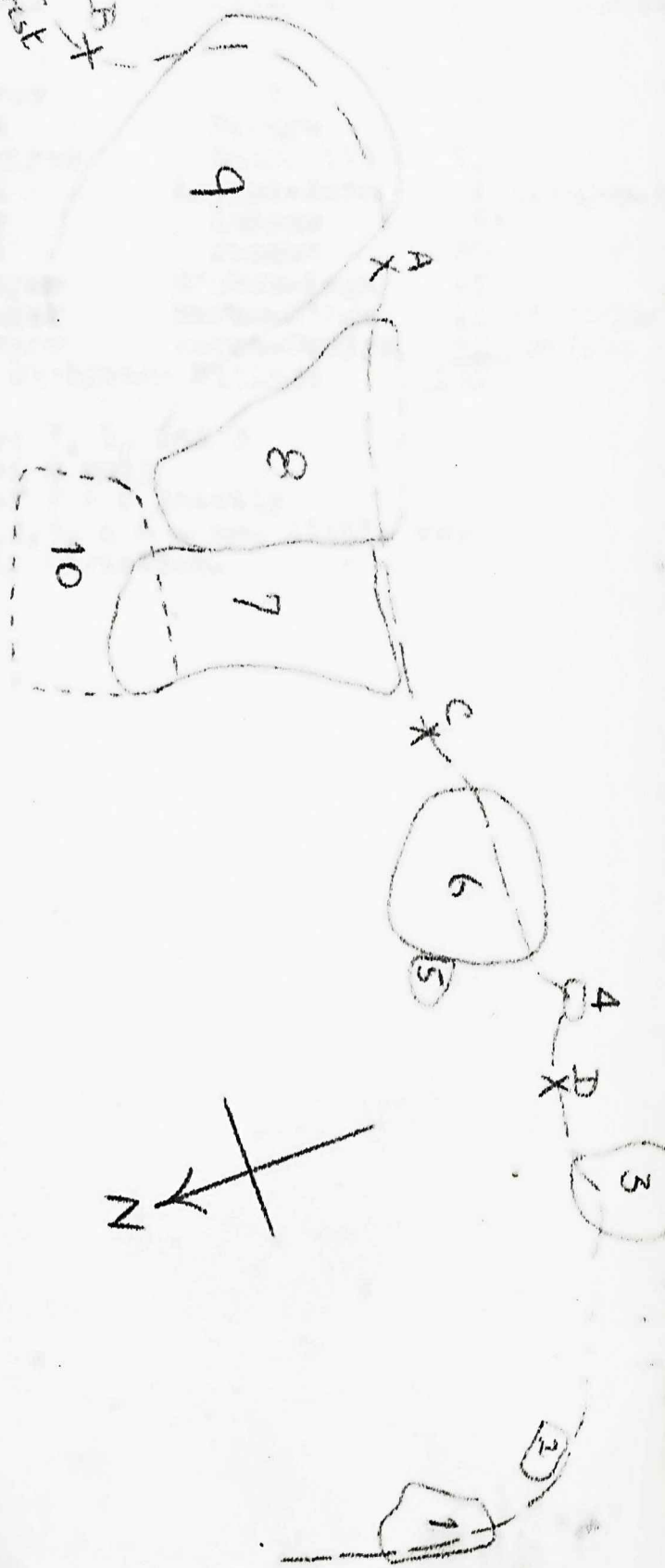


DIAGRAM 2

Hpalang Village Cluster -  
Diagram showing arrangement  
of villages along Hpalang  
Ridge.



Diagram Key.

93.

No.	Village	Language Group.	Principle Lineage	Approx. No of Houses 1939
1.	Yawyung-muwa	Chinese	?	14
2.	Yawyung-maru	Maru	Hpaayu	4
3.	Gauri	Gauri-Jinghpaw	Dashi (?)	17
4.	Lahpai	Atsi	Lahpai-Aura	1 Atsi Chief
5.	Nahpaw	Lieu	Nahpaw	3
6.	Sumnut	Atsi	Sumnut	20
7.	Laga	Jinghpaw	N'ikun-Laga	22
8.	Maran	Jinghpaw	Maran-N'mwe	18 N'mwe Chief
9.	Gumjye	Jinghpaw	Maran-Gumjye	31 Gumjye "
10.	Site of New School and Christian Village			<u>130</u>

- A - Former joint Munshang of 7, 8, and 9  
 B - Present " of 9 only  
 C - Present " of 7 & 8 jointly  
 D - Joint Munshang of 2, 3, 4, 5, & 6 - now little used  
 because group is largely Christian.

### Chapter 3.

#### Kachin Social Structure

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As I have already explained in the closing paragraphs of Chapter 1 the title "Kachin Social Structure" must not be read as implying that we are in this chapter describing the structural form of something specific which can be labelled Kachin Culture or Kachin Society. What I am attempting rather is to describe, in simplified model form, something that might be described as the "highest common factor" of the social structure of a large area.

But though the area is large the scale of society to be considered is fairly small. Generally speaking the structural relations that are examined are those which occur within the confines of local community defined by the Kachin term mung ("tract") and its Shan equivalent mong ; that is to say a human community of some 6,000 persons at the outside and often very much smaller. The larger scale structural relations which knit together all such mung <sup>HILLS</sup> throughout the Kachin <sup>are</sup> are not examined in detail or reduced to generalised form. This is an important limitation. "The Kachins" as I have defined them may number well over 300,000



persons. The useful generalisations that can be made about this group treated as a single whole are very few.

Nevertheless the conventional large scale cultural classification<sup>1</sup> in <sup>TO</sup>Burman, Shan, Assamese, Manipuri, Chin, Naga, Kachin, Wa and Karen imply something rather more than the random partitioning of a map area into a set of segments. True there are some Nagas who are indistinguishable from Kachins and others who are indistinguishable from Chins and it is true also that the Naga "tribes" - as usually defined - considered one by one show very wide variation; nevertheless Nagas, taken as a whole are different from Chins, taken as a whole, or Kachins taken as a whole. A structural analysis of the modal type of Chin local community, compared with a similar analysis of the modal types of Naga, Kachin, Karen, and Wa local communities would show a strong family resemblance between all of them, but that does not mean that they are all identical. In the Naga pattern for example an age grade system is apparent. The system of Feasts of Merit among the Chins is possibly, in a structural sense, of similar "function", and significantly age grades appear in the political order of the Meithei<sup>1</sup>, but there is no close parallel to this among the Kachins. The overall picture then is of

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1. Hodson (ii).

a continuum of variation which for convenience may, at the crudest level, be blocked under some nine modal types. Each mode is the type of a wide range of variation in detail, but the nine modes are themselves essentially related and represent only contrasts in emphasis.

What appears as the highest common factor in such a group of modal patterns will clearly depend to some extent upon one's centre of interest, but more especially upon one's centre of observation. If one studies in the first place Nagas, then Chins or Kachins may appear as variations on a Naga theme; since however I personally have studied Kachins I present my pattern in Kachin terms but I bring into prominence only those features of the Kachin mode which seem to me, in a broad sense, common to the whole area. The precise nature of this similarity between the Kachin pattern and the variations which appear in other areas will become more apparent in later chapters; meanwhile it may be of value to stress the type of structural characteristic I have in mind as being generally applicable.

(1) Throughout the whole Burma-Assam area two basic types of agriculture constantly recur - wet paddy cultivation in artificially constructed fields or terraces, and dry paddy cultivation in shifting jungle clearings. Sometimes these types occur independently, more usually, as complementary systems.



(ii) Systems of authority commonly vary in two ways. First there is the contrast between what is described as autocratic and democratic (or republican) government; secondly, in the hierarchical pattern of the autocratic type of government, there is variation in the scale of the political grouping, - with the old Burmese kingdom at one extreme and small "independent" villages at the other.

(iii) While the special species of status differentiation involved in age grading seems to be limited to the Naga area, and is therefore not considered in this book, there is a general variation between groups which distinguish sharply between aristocrats and commonality and those which are equalitarian. Correspondingly the economic bondage which Europeans loosely label "slavery" had formerly in some areas a class significance, but in others was purely economic, - by which I mean that the "slave" as such did not lose caste.

(iv) In all areas there are links between the rulers and the land. These links are expressed in ritual, and are everywhere tied up with the concept that the rulers through their ritual powers control the fertility of the land and/or the general welfare of the inhabitants. The model type of this ritual ideology shows a significance<sup>7</sup> and continuous variation from a simple cult of ancestors at one extreme to that of an elaborately organised Buddhist State church at the other.

In this Chapter I show how these selected crucial features "tie in together" in the particular case of the Kachin modal pattern. In later chapters, elaborating this theme, I show how political, economic and ritual frontiers do not coincide, thus leading to the conclusion that cultural flux in the sense of the constant movement not only of "traits" but of individuals and groups of individuals from "one culture" into "another culture" is in this area a normal and continuous process, which provides the mechanism for constant change and development.

Cultural variation within the local area.

But even when the implications of "Kachin modal structure" have been thus carefully restricted, it still remains obscure as to just what group of people it is that provide the data for my modal abstraction. Are they a group at all? Are they all members of one culture? If so what culture? Even that much is difficult to answer.

So far as the synthesis is derived from my own observation it is derived mainly from my observations at Hpalang, a cluster of villages on the China border east of  
 1.  
 Bhamo; so far as the source is from the general literature

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1. See end of Chapter 2.



on "Kachins", I have already indicated something of the very polyglot connotations of that term. Hpalang however was in many respects an excellent microcosm of "Kachin Culture" if it is legitimate to use such an expression. Economically it had a definite unity, though it was not self sufficient in its food resources; politically, but for the British, it might have had a unity under Jinghpaw leadership, though actually, at the time of my observation in 1939, owing to British administrative interference over a long period, there were in a sense five political groupings, of which two were Jinghpaw, one Atsi, one Chinese, and one mixed Christian. The ritual pattern was even more involved than this because there were two rival sects of Christians. Linguistically Jinghpaw was a lingua franca but, as house speech, Jinghpaw, Atsi, Keri, and Chinese were all in use actually within the Hpalang community, and Lise and Shan were spoken by neighbours living within a couple of miles on either side. The sort of modal structure that can be abstracted from such an agglomeration is clearly not<sup>1</sup> a "cultural mode" in any commonly accepted sense.

The structural framework against which this babel can be systematised must be one in which the abstract principles

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1. It must not be supposed that the mixed composition of Hpalang is in any way exceptional. Mixed language village clusters are common throughout the whole Burma Region.

of relationship cut across the overt cultural frontiers of common language, common dress, common technique and so on. The principle of organisation which serves this purpose best is that of kinship.

In native theory, if not in substantive fact, all Kachins are members of a common kinship system. In so far as there is now a growing consciousness among Kachins that they are different from their neighbours, it expresses itself in the feeling that the others are outside the kinship group. The Kachin us is often bombastically expressed as anhte kahpu kansu ni mayu dame ni lawu lahta ni jinghpaw<sup>1</sup> ni yawng - which might be literally translated as "we classificatory brothers, affinal relatives on both sides, remote relatives of cognate lineages, we are all Jinghpaw." In this sense and only in this sense is it legitimate to speak of a specifically Kachin social structure. We can then start from this point.

Despite the uneven quality of the evidence it can be asserted with confidence that among all the hill peoples of the Assam Burma area the basic structural feature around which society is organised is a kinship framework of segmenting lineages of a straightforward type. The pattern

1. See Leach.



is well known to modern Social Anthropologists. An example in which the individual segments are not exogamous has been studied in great detail by Firth: examples of the African exogamous type have received modern treatment from Evans-Fritchard and Fortes. (1)

Elsewhere I have explained that while the terminology of Kachin, or at any rate Jinghpaw, organisation rests on a theory that the individual lineages are exogamous, the practical application of exogamy is not carried very far. (2) Within the local community, within which individuals are bound by practical ties of economic obligation and common ritual, the lineage group, whether large or small, is genuinely exogamous. But beyond the local community lineage or clan exogamy is a fiction.

There is fairly general agreement, supported not only by current traditions but by documentary reports dating back for over a century that there are some six or seven (3) main Jinghpaw clans all with their roots in the Kachin Triangle. Lineages claiming to be offshoots of these main

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1. R. Firth. (1) E. E. Evans-Fritchard (11) M. Fortes (11).

2. Leach (1)

3. There are five generally accepted "chiefly" (du baw) clans: Marip, Lahpai, Lahtaw, N'hkum, Maran but locally there are other clans of equal or greater importance: Hpawwi, Kareng, Duleng, Jaseh, Tsasen, Laban etc. All these are distinct from the five du baw clans but are sometimes classed all as members one or another either as Kareng or Hpawwi.

Jinghpaw clans are found dispersed throughout the whole Kachin area, these segments are not necessarily Jinghpaw - they may be Mung, Dulang, Tsasen, Atsi, Lashi, Gauri, Maru, Lisu, Kedu or even Naga.

Thus the linkages that are provided by this widespread "web of kinship" are primarily local in significance. They establish bonds between the various cultural subgroups but they do not really weld them into an integrated cultural unity. But in the local small scale context such kinship links do have an integrating force which may override linguistic barriers.

For example, lineages which claim to be segments of the Jinghpaw Lahpai clan will be found among Singpho in Assam, Mung in the Nam Tamai, Yawyin (Lisu) near Myitkyina, Atsi near Hogaung and also in China and the Shan States, Maru near Htawngaw and so on, but it is fictitious to assert that all these groups jointly form one clan. The more dispersed elements have no mutual recognition of each other's existence, and there is not even the pretence that they should jointly form an exogenous group. Yet locally the common clanship is significant. Thus within the comparatively restricted area of the Sinlun Hills east of Bhamo the Atsi Chiefs, the Gauri Chiefs and also certain Jinghpaw Chiefs all claim to belong to segments of the Shedan-Lahpai principal lineage which also provides the principal Jinghpaw Chiefs of the



South Triangle. On that account these Lahpai Chiefs of the Siam area recognise between themselves a fairly close practical bond of kinship regardless of their linguistic differences. In the same area there are also Mru, Lisu, Palaung, Chinese and Shan speaking groups; among these groups too there are households claiming affiliation with the Jinghpaw Lahpai <sup>(1)</sup> clan. This again does not mean that these minor groups are wholly incorporated into the Jinghpaw cultural system but that locally and for certain purposes, especially economic purposes there is a partial incorporation.

This theme of overlapping cultures, or if you prefer it, the non-coincidence of the fields of different institutions, will recur throughout this book, and the reader is asked to bear this type of variation constantly in mind. But now let us turn to the formal structural analysis.

#### The formal structure. Lineage segments.

The ideal pattern of this structure is that of a number of clans the supposed genealogies of which converge in antiquity to a common point "the first man". By a process of repeated fission these clans may be regarded as

1. of Enriquez (11), 141; Fraser (1) I once met a Lisu from the Hpalang area who said that his Jinghpaw clan (amph) was Lahpai, his Chinese clan Lao Shawag and his Lisu clan Wawhpa.

WAWHPA

being split into a series of segments of descending order of magnitude, to describe which Evans-Fritchard and Fortes<sup>1.</sup> have proposed a series of adjectives such as maximal, major, medial, nuclear, minor, minimal, a terminology which I personally find only slightly less clumsy than the more old fashioned "sub-clan", "section of a sub-clan", "sub-section" and so on. If however the system be viewed from the present rather than from the past, that is as an aggregate of small units rather than as the product of multiple fission, some of this complexity can be avoided.

The smallest segment of the structure, the household (htingaw), - "extended family" or "minimal lineage" if you prefer it - has a strong territorial link with its place of residence. In many cases the household name (htingaw anying) is unique to a particular village; other members of the same lineage living in other villages have a different household name. The ancestor whose spirit is especially associated with any household was, as a rule, its founder. That does not necessarily mean that the founder-ancestor built the ancestral home on its present site. A household may move as a whole from one site to another, even from one village to another, without altering its ritual associations; its members may even divide and yet continue to consider

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1. Evans Fritchard (1) Chapter V. Fortes (11) 32/37, 196-207.



themselves one household, (one hearth - *dap langai ni*); but if a household splits in a ritual sense so that the builders of a new house consider they are founding a new household (*htingaw*), then properly speaking a new ancestor spirit <sup>(1)</sup> should be added to the hierarchy of "household nats". In theory then the "household nats" of a particular household should represent its history. The most recently acquired nat should be associated with the local lineage segment, "the minimal lineage", the next should comprise the next largest lineage aggregate and so on, so that finally the senior and most ancient of the household nats should represent the whole of the "maximal lineage" wherever it is dispersed. Something broadly corresponding to this ideal is to be found in the ritual ideology of chief's families, but it cannot be regarded as the general pattern. In practice the number of household nats which any particular household controls, - <sup>(2)</sup> or "gives to" - varies according to the social status of the household concerned; and this variation broadly corresponds to the degree to which the "minimal lineage" in question is aggregated into the larger system.

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1. The word nat as implying a spiritual being of almost any kind is common to Burmese and Jinghpaw and is sufficiently anglicised to be given an English plural.
  2. nat jaw ai "to give to the nats". So far as household nats are concerned the principle is that one can make effective offerings directly only to one's own ancestors. Approach to other spirits must in general be indirect through the intercession of one's own nats.

Persons of low social status, such as slaves (meyam)<sup>(1)</sup> and commoners (darei darat), seldom know anything of their ancestry more than three generations back; the hierarchy of their ancestral spirits is very restricted; their kinship and economic links are strictly local; they have no need for the elaborate superstructure of clanship which links together, even if only in a very tenuous manner, all the aristocratic lineages throughout the whole area.

But among aristocrats also there is variation in the range of kinship affiliation as expressed by the effective length of lineage ancestry.<sup>(2)</sup> Firstly to consider the chiefs proper. From their central position it follows almost inevitably that the effective kinship links of chiefs from the central Triangle area should be more extensive than those of chiefs living on the fringe of the Kachin area. Thus Shadan Tu, the leading Lephal chief in the South Triangle, has real (i.e., effective) kinship links with the Mingku-Lephal chiefs in the Hukawng, with the Atai Chiefs in the Mogaung, Sadon, Sialum and Mongmao areas, with the Gauri chiefs of Sialum and so on; in contrast the Hawwa Duwa, an influential chief of the Kachin area in North Hsenwi belonging to the Laika-Maran lineage, appears to have only very tenuous ties

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1. In the Triangle and the Hukawng slavery was not abolished even officially until 1926. The term meyam as a class grading is still in common use. The sense in which the traditional meyam was a "slave" is discussed below.

2. cf. Evans Pritchard (1) p.106.



with his fellow Maran chiefs of the Sinlum Hills and Mongmao and none at all with the Marans further north. Excellent proof that the range of nominal kinship greatly exceeds the range of effective kinship is provided by the story current throughout the southern Kachin area that there are no longer any Marip chiefs because all the chiefly (du baw) lineages of this clan have died out.<sup>(1)</sup> Now though it is true that there are no Marip chiefs anywhere in the Sinpaw area, many of the most important chiefs both in the Triangle and the Hukawng are Marip; thus proving the lack of effective contact between the northern and southern areas in this respect.

Long ago it was noted that the chiefs of the southern fringe areas tend to have much shorter genealogies than those of the Triangle and this fact was thought to provide proof that the Kachins, other than Palaungs, had only quite recently entered the Sinlum and Northern Shan States areas.<sup>(2)</sup> Nowadays we tend to be more critical, and sceptical, of the supposed historical content of traditional tales, but the differential size of various Kachin genealogical tables is interesting.

Viewed only from the present, a genealogy serves a useful function by placing in mutual relation the various

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1. Enriquez (11) p.27. The same story was separately recorded

by myself in two separate southern localities (a) at Hpeleng, (b) at Kutkai. When faced with the discovery that there are in fact a large number of Marip chiefs in the north a southerner tends to assert that they must be upstarts and not of true uma origin.

2. Enriquez (11) pp. 136, 138.

(1)  
 known segments of a chief's lineage. It follows that a chief who is centrally placed and thereby aware of a large number of different segments claiming affiliation with his own clan will need a longer genealogy than a chief living on the fringe with a relatively restricted knowledge of the total clan framework. This corresponds with the observed facts. Tradition, it is true, tells us that all the Jinghpaw came (2) originally from an area somewhat to the north of the Triangle. Since this tale also is in accordance with observed fact, it possibly in some sense mirrors an historical occurrence. That we cannot tell. My point is merely this. If it be remembered that all Kachin tradition is handed down only by word of mouth it must be obvious that only those parts of a tradition which have immediate relevance to the local situation are likely to be remembered in an intelligible form. Other portions of the story will either drop out altogether or else become so garbled as to be unrecognisable.

It is a fact then that even among the chiefly lineages there is wide variation in the degree of practical clan aggregation; but this is not all. There are in the first place two kinds of chief - "true born" (uma) or "thigh eating chiefs" (magyi she ai du) - and "titular chiefs" (guarawng

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1. cf. Evans-Pritchard (1), 104/108. G & M. Wilson (1) 27, 28.  
 2. Hanson (v).



gumsa du) and the lineages that provide such chiefs may all be described as "of chiefly kind" (du bew).<sup>(1)</sup> But in addition there are other lineages, still aristocratic in their way, but who claim respectability not through virtue of rights to any particular title but as collateral branches from a true du bew line. Such junior grade aristocratic segments are ma gam amyu "eldest son lineages". This terminology derives from the convention that chiefly succession normally passes to the youngest son, the uma; by birthright therefore the eldest son, Ma Gam, is not a chief but only an aristocrat. Households which claim respectability therefore assert that they are "eldest son lineages".

In general the genealogy of a household of ma gam amyu status is intermediate in length between that of commoners and chiefs in that particular area.

It is a characteristic of the society that all chiefly and aristocratic lineages should be able to trace back their ancestry to the beginning of time, and there are professional experts, jsiwa, whose role it is to accomplish this feat. The number of generations from the beginning until the present is however a variable factor depending upon the social status of the family concerned, the reputation of the jsiwa, and perhaps, the amount of available alcohol! However that may be,

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1. The significance of these various terms is further discussed below.

if a chief and a non-chief admit to a common ancestor the former in my experience almost invariably recounts several extra intermediate generations.

The elders of any household naturally know the full details of the last few generations of their family tree. It is the special role of the jaiwa, as a sort of repository of history, to be able to fit these household stories together into a coherent whole. To be entirely successful the jaiwa needs to be able to aggregate all known chiefly lineages to a single pyramid point many generations back. Since the total of chiefly lineages is very large and the total Kachin area very vast, any one jaiwa can of necessity only be acquainted personally with a small part of the total picture. Different jaiwa therefore have different theories as to how the various leading lineages should be aggregated together and the discrepancies are the greater as one gets further away from one's original point of observation. This perhaps is not fully apparent from the literature because the versions given by Hanson, Wehrli, George and others are syntheses of stories from several different areas. But any first hand attempt to collect such stories will immediately reveal wide variations of almost every particular. That this should be so is not surprising.

The jaiwa's stories are related or rather intoned in  
 1. See Bibliography.



a form of rhymed verse, which is composed in a special flowery <sup>MA</sup>arcanic form of Jinghpaw (jaiwa ga) which differs widely from colloquial speech. A competent jaiwa can reputedly carry on for several days without repeating himself. The general historical value of such tales may perhaps be assessed from the frequency with which the fabled ancestors married wives whose names conveniently rhymed with their own

Mashat Labat - Mahtung Kaw Tsing Lat (1)  
Kading nu Ning Awn - Numrang Jan Kadawn

Venerable age and a poetic imagination are the qualities that produce a great jaiwa rather than any special tendency towards historical accuracy. According to Fr. Gilhodes, the most learned jaiwa in the Sinlum Hills, in the early days of this century, was by birth a Shan; in the late 1930s there were many who asserted that the most learned jaiwa in the Sinlum Hills was Fr. Gilhodes himself! (2)

It is worth considering some of these discrepancies in their crude forms.

In the more southerly parts of the area it is generally

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1. Kawlu Ma Nawang (1)

2. Gilhodes (1). It is a fact that in the late thirties Father Gilhodes was often consulted on points of tradition by the Kachins themselves. With the decline in prestige of traditional ritual and the corresponding decline in the economic advantages of being a jaiwa, the profession is dying out. It was never an hereditary role; the traditional learning was handed on from master to pupil and learnt by rote.

held that all chiefs are necessarily members of one or other of the five chiefly clans, Marip, Lahtaw, Lahpai, N'Ekum, Naran. This point is conceded by the Atsien Gauri who have Lahpai chiefs and also in a vague way by the Yawyin (Lisu). The Maru and Lashi in the south are usually "republican". Further north the dogma of five exclusive chiefly clans does not hold. These five clan names remain the most important but there are, besides, other lineages which claim to provide chiefs but which are outside the five clan system. Jeiwa theory varies therefore as to how far these contradictory dogmas can be combined. Are the extraneous chiefly lineages really part of the five clan system? Or are they quite distinct? Two examples will suffice.

First the case of the Kareng. In the Triangle area and also in the Sinprow the Kareng are generally said to be of Hpsawi clan and not descended from Wahkyet Wa the common ancestor of the five main chiefly clans. Accordingly, in the Sinprow, the Kareng are not chiefs. In the Lanjong tract of the North Triangle however the Kareng are chiefs, and decidedly influential ones; whether they are actually "thigh eating chiefs" (magyi sha ai du) in this area I am not sure; in the Htingnai area however at Uai Ga near Sahmaw the Kareng are chiefs of great influence and importance; they are here definitely "thigh eating chiefs" of full status and hold frequent manau ceremonies to the Madai nat. Here, in the



Htingnai, the Kareng rate as members of the Marip clan - one of the five recognised chiefly clans. Now the first we hear of the Karengs in the literature is in an interesting hearsay report picked up by Lt. Elliot somewhere in the vicinity of Punlumbum in 1890.<sup>(1)</sup>

"The prevalent tribes among the Kakus are the Maran Lataung, 'Nkum, Mariss and Karine; the 'Nkum being the most powerful ..... The Karines live east of the Mali Kka; they make dahs and sell them to the people of the Kati (Kkanti) country and on the borders of Assam. The Kanongs (Kanungs) live in the high mountains east of the Karines with whom they have a good deal of intercourse ....."

To anyone with a local knowledge, it is clear that the "Karines", living between the Mali Kka and the Kanung and experts in making dahs, must be identified with the people now known as Duleng or as they call themselves Dureng. Now the Dureng mung - the Duleng country - is a tract determined by certain river boundaries; the inhabitants are of very mixed descent, and are now all "republicans" (gumlaos) in the sense described below. Yet locally it is asserted that formerly the Duleng were a single clan (amyu langai mi) and that their leaders were "great chiefs" (du kaba).<sup>(2)</sup> They do

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1. Welker (1) 165. "Punlumbum" - slightly to the west of the Mali Kka, S.E. from modern Samprabum.

2. The expression given me was du kaba maju kinji. I failed to interpret maju kinji.

For a further connection between Kareng, Ka-Lang and Duleng see Chapter VI.



not claim that they are an offshoot of one of the other five chiefly clans but that their ancestor Dureng Yawng Heng was  
(1)  
one of seven sons of the common ancestor Wahkyet Wa.

The Tessen or Jassen provide another case in point. They themselves claim to be descendants of Tessen Wa Tu Sen a son of Wahkyet Wa and thus chiefly (du daw). Ky Duleng informant gave them the same origin. Geis rates them as  
(2)  
Jasen Shaden a branch of the Marip. George and Hanson between them assert that they are a branch of the Marip, a branch of the M'Kum and a branch of the Lahtew!!

These two examples are by no means exceptional but they are significant. They imply clearly that no historical value can be attached to any of the Kachin traditional stories

1. The number of sons of Wahkyet is usually either seven or eight with some competition for the last place with its implication of uma du - the youngest son line. The last place is usually either No 7 "La N'ika - Hkashu Hkasha" or No 8, "La N'ying - Maran Wa Kyng Heng". Marans naturally prefer the latter version but the former is more adjustable since no one knows for certain who the Hkashu Hkasha ni really are. A comparison of all published versions of Jinghpaw origin myths shows that only three clans Marip, Lahtaw and Lahpei are common to all versions. The ancestors of these three clans moreover consistently appear as the three eldest sons of a common ancestor. It is arguable therefore that these three clans are more basic to the system than any others.

For myth relating the Hkashu Hkasha ni to their uma status see Kewla Ma Mawng p.3.

Hanson (iv) and Carapatt(1), 2 both make Hkashu Hkasha a branch of the Lahtaw; in the north it is sometimes said to be Marip.

2. Geis (1), George (11); Hanson (iv), 220.



except where such stories are backed by independent evidence from non-traditional sources. They further indicate the practical flexibility of what at first sight has the appearance of a somewhat rigid structural pattern. In practice the groups which Evans-Pritchard would call "maximal lineages" are fitted together in different ways so as to satisfy local requirements. If there are no Maran chiefs in a certain area then the Maran Clan may be given no place in the general scheme at all. Or again if you happen to belong to a group that holds that the senior line always passes through the youngest son, it is natural to make your own ancestor a youngest son compared with the ancestors of your neighbours. Cumulatively this type of differential interest can produce an almost unlimited range of variations in even the simplest "origin myth".

The nature of the link by which two lineages are deemed to unite in a common ancestor has considerable comparative interest, and is also important sociologically as a source of dispute. If a clan were to ~~split~~ split at the point in the genealogical tree where there are two sons of the same parents, it would seem, on the basis of the rule of ultimogeniture succession, that the branch stemming from the youngest son should be the senior. In practice the mythological account seldom admits this principle in an unqualified manner. There are a variety of "rules" which make

the question of seniority of lineage status open to dispute and alternative interpretation. Firstly, distinction is drawn between the first wife (latung num) and the secondary wives (lashi num, labai num). Those whom it suits to do so will argue that the succession passes to the youngest son of the latung num only and not to the youngest of all sons. (1) Secondly a complication is introduced by the levirate. A widow normally remains as a domiciled member of her deceased husband's group and is "collected" (hta ei lit, "to pick up from the floor", or Kahkyin ei lit, "to gather together in a heap") by one of her late husband's real or classificatory brothers. If children result from this later union they are apparently of inferior status to those born of the first union. Kawlu Ma Nawng gives two cases where the inferior status of one lineage in comparison to another is explained mythologically on these lines. Thirdly there is outright illegitimacy. Where a child is born out of wedlock to an unmarried girl no feud stands against the father provided the girl and her parents receive the appropriate compensation, (sumrai hka). It is optional to the father whether or not he keeps the child, but in the case of a son he usually does so. In status such a child appears to rate with the child of a lashi num. On the other hand if the illegitimate boy remains with the mother and she later marries, the child is

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1. Kawlu Ma Nawng pp 8/9. Here the children of the lesser wives cited are clearly of lower status than the children



an nji, - a bastard - and his status in the lineage structure rather ambiguous. This feature appears in another myth  
(1)  
recorded by Kawi Ma Nawng, the consequences of which seems to be that the Tansen descendants of the nji in question are regarded as having clan linkage with all the three groups concerned - namely the descendants of the mother, the father and the mother's husband.

From this we see that the jaiwa has plenty of quite "orthodox" rules and mechanisms through which he can always adjust his main story to fit local circumstance. Which again confirms the view that tradition is far removed from history. Viewed independently, the traditions of each independent segment of the system are not necessarily entirely fictional, at any rate in the more recent stages, but the fitting together of the segments into a single whole is a construct, both artificial and inconsistent. The various lineages traced backwards in time are supposed to aggregate into a clear cut pyramid. They do not do so; the clan linkage is confused and overlapping.

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(etc from page 116.) of first wives. But the point can be disputed; the late Kensi Duwa of the Jade Mines area had a first wife who was a Kachin whose son married a Shan, and a second wife who was a Shan whose son married a Kachin. The succession was disputed.

1. Ibid p.11. However a man and woman may live together for years before being formally married nam shalai ni. All offspring are technically nji unless legitimatised into the father's lineage through payment of the shurai hka the completion of the shalai ceremony. Ideologically the latter ceremony is a formal introduction of the new woman to the ancestor spirit of the man's household.

We should have expected this. Obviously it is absurd to suppose that such a polyglot genetically diverse group as the modern Kachins could in fact have a common ancestor in a single individual, or even anything resembling a "common racial origin". Common sense suggests that they are an agglomerate of peoples incorporating ethnic strains and cultural "traits" borrowed from their neighbours on all sides. If so, then the tradition of common origin is to be regarded as merely a symptom of the continuous process of social integration.

This view however finds no support in the existing literature according to which a somewhat mythical entity "the Kachin race" formerly resided in the "ancestral home", later to sweep down into Burma as a vast marauding horde.  
1.  
It is a picturesque concept

The ancestral nidus.. no doubt must be sought among the highlands of Mongolia .. Here stood the cradle of the race. In unison with a large number of related tribes, Nagas, Chins, Lulus and possibly Karens, a movement south commenced. The Kachins held the central position, and while weaker tribes were allowed to pass the Jinghpaw tribes were held back by the strong Shan rulers in Assam and Burma... As the Yunnan Shans lost their grip, and the Ahoms in Assam became weak the Kachins again began to move .....

I do not intend to spend any time demonstrating the absurdity of this sort of thing, but it explains why much of the

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standard ethnography is of no value to us for demonstrating long standing interrelations between the inhabitants of a wide area.

The standard literature assumes as a start that Kachins, Chins, Nagas etc have existed from the beginning as discrete "racial" entities; in effect therefore it accepts uncritically the truth of the mythological construct of the people themselves. The possibility that this construct is itself adaptable to circumstance is not seriously considered.

In any case whatever may have been the historical facts, the practical social function of the jaiwa's learning is to place local lineage groups in correct ritual relationship with one another, and to justify the existing order as it affects rights to land obligations towards chiefs, and so forth. It may be observed that this social function of a "living" mythology loses importance under conditions in which a paramount Administration maintains the status quo in any case. One of the consequences of modern education has been to break the continuity of jaiwa learning. The social implications of this are at present masked by the compulsory stability imposed by the Administration.

#### Political structure. Territorial segmentation and lineage segmentation.

It is now necessary to consider how this segmentary kinship system with all its regional variations is related to the political structure on the ground. In this I propose to

ignore altogether for the time being, the complications introduced by the existence of a paramount British administration.

There is a considerable range<sup>E</sup> of variation in the degree of political cohesion to be encountered in Kachin society. At the one extreme there are small villages (gahtawng) of perhaps only three or four houses each<sup>1</sup>, under its own headman (axyi wa), who claims to be an entirely independent ruler. At the other extreme there is a fully developed hierarchy of chieftainship in which the paramount chief of a large tract (mung duwa) has under him a number of minor chiefs (mareng or mare duwa) who in turn have under them a number of village headmen, in this case usually known as salang wa. Intermediately there are groups of small villages, sometimes dispersed, sometimes in close territorial combination, which jointly form a "village cluster" (mareng, mare). Sometimes such village clusters have a chief (duwa) with a council of subordinate headmen (salang wa) and elders (myit su wa - lit. "wise man"); sometimes on the other hand the council is equalitarian and recognises no titular chief. In addition there are isolated independent villages similar to those first mentioned, but in which the headman, by reason of blood, is a chief (duwa) and not merely an axyi wa.

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1. Some statistics relating to the size of the local community in different Areas are given in the next chapter.



This general type of variation in the size of the political aggregate is not confined to the Kachin Hills but is common to practically all the hill areas within the Burma-Assam region. In the literature, independent villages and village clusters which do not recognise chiefs are alleged to be "democratic" or "republican"; tracts or village clusters, or single villages which recognise a titular chief are alleged to be "autocratic", and it seems to be generally supposed that the latter are always more powerful political organisations than the former.<sup>1</sup> In practice however the distinction that can thus be drawn between "democratic" and "autocratic" organisation is one of degree rather than kind, and turns finally upon rather fine points of ritual procedure. Also while it is true that all the larger permanent political structures are on the autocratic pattern,<sup>2</sup> there have been some notable short lived exceptions. The Tashon confederation which dominated the Chin Hills at the time of the British annexation was of the "democratic" type<sup>3</sup>; so also in the Naga Hills, although no particular group was actually paramount, it was the "democratically" organised groups, notably the Angami, who held the strategically and economically valuable sites.

In the Kachins the "democratic" type of organisation occurs among the Maru group generally, but among the Jinghpaw

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1. Smith (1) 142/4.

2. e.g., The Shan States.

3. Stevenson (vi), 14 and 12a.



only as something of an aberration.

The Kachins themselves recognise that their system contains several different modes of political organisation, and on first enquiry it might appear that the Kachin categories might be correlated with the distinctions I have just drawn. Thus the independent village under a headman (axyi wa) is described as gunlao, the similar village under a na kam axyu headman with a courtesy du title may be gunrawna gunsa, while villages under true chiefs (uma du) or (axyi sha ai du) are said to be gunayina gunsa.<sup>1</sup>

The contrast between gunlao and gunsa therefore seems to correspond to the "democratic" "autocratic" contrast to which I have just referred. Elliot in 1891 reported on the gunlao in this sense with perhaps unfortunate consequences.

According to Elliot<sup>2</sup>

"Formerly every Kachin village was ruled by an hereditary official called a Sawbwa; the villages were obliged to cultivate his land without compensation and were subject to many other imposts. These taxes having become very onerous a revolution was started about twenty years ago and spread very rapidly chiefly in the tract between the Mali Mka and the N'mai Mka rivers, which led to the murder or deposition of a large number of Sawbwaa and the appointment of certain headmen called Akyis or Salangs in their places. The villages which are now without Sawbwaa are called Kamlao or rebel villages in contradistinction to the others which are Kamsa or Sawbwa owning villages.

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1. H.M.C. Stevenson in a personal communication tells me that he has analysed the distinction between gunrawna gunsa and gunayina gunsa in his Report on the South Triangle Expedition of 1930-31. I have been unable to check the reference.

2. Walker, (1), 164.



The difficulty of a march through Kachin country is greatly enhanced if the people of the villages passed through have no Sawbwas and are Kamlaos and not Kansas. With an hereditary Sawbwa if he is friendly no trouble need be expected from the villagers, but in a Kamlaos village which is practically a small republic, the headman, however well meaning he may be is quite unable to control the actions of any badly disposed villager.."

There are many very interesting features about this account. In the first place as to fact. Had there really been anything in the nature of a rebellion "about 20 years ago" - i.e., about 1870? It is possible, but I doubt it. The area in question, around Sagribum and N'gum La, today has "gunlao chiefs", and two of them, Sumhka Lau and Mangala Uri Nawng, are by way of being tract chiefs (mung duma). True these are British Government appointments but their influence seems to have been substantially the same as in pre-annexation days.<sup>1</sup> The local story is still that there was a gunlao revolt against the former Lahpai Chiefs and that the specific issue at stake was whether or not every household should pay to the chief the standard contribution of a hind leg (mayi) of every animal killed. True the inhabitants do not pay the mayi to their present "chiefs", but the "chiefs" in question are of orthodox chiefly (du haw) lineage and closely related with "thigh eating chiefs" (mayi sha ai du) in neighbouring

tracts.<sup>1</sup> The story today is that this revolt took place "only one generation ago"; - it seems a rather flexible generation. It also seems to have escaped notice that these same gunsa and gunlas were already reported in situ and well established as early as 1879. "Alaga" was an anonymous Burman trained in Rangoon and specially despatched to the north to discover the source of the Irrawaddy. He was successful but produced an interesting account of the Triangle Kachins.<sup>2</sup>

"The Knsa Kachins stretch as far north as lat. 26 at Marapoon; they are a savage race and each village is under its own swaba (sic) or chief, who is supreme. Beyond the Knsa are the Khanloung Kachins; these are described as a degree less savage and their swabas appear to be under a king-swaba called Marangyee (i.e. the great Maran); he is more mighty than any other swaba and has many adherents."

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1. Sumka Zau is lineage Sumpawng-Sumka a branch of the Lahpai and closely linked with the leading Shadan-Lahpai lineage. There is some cross link which I do not understand with the leading Lahtaw lineage Kadaw. In 1915 a Sumpawng was chief of Kadaw Uma Ga, and in 1943 another Kadaw-Lahtaw (Hounrau Tang) referred to Sumka Zau as if he was a clan brother. Mangala Uri Mawng is, I think, of Lahtaw clan.
  2. Sandeman, (1) 257.

This is an abstract of "Alaga's" report. the Original appears to have been a confidential official document. The use of the term sawbwa, swaba, tsawbwa etc., in these quotations as meaning Kachin Chief (duwa) is common to all the early literature. The word is the Shan sao-hna. Similarly the Shan term paw-mong (written pawmine, pawnaing, bawnaing etc.,) is used for the Jinghpaw salangwa (village headman subordinate to a chief.)



It seems inescapable that "Alaga's" Kansa and Khanlounng must be Elliot's Kansa and Kamlao and the modern Gumsa and Gumlao. That the roles are reversed so that the Kansa are credited with a more fragmented political structure than the Khanlounng may or may not be a mistake.

The suggestion implicit in all this is that the dichotomy gumsa and gumlao is of long standing. This view has been enormously strengthened by Kawlu Ma Nawng's account of the History of the Kachine in the Mukauna Valley. In this account the gumlao "rebellion" is still a leitmotiv, but it is represented as having taken place hundreds of years ago near the beginning of time, and in consequence a perpetual feud between the gumsa and the gumlao has been carried on ever since.

In terms of practical behaviour the contrast between gumlao and gumsa ultimately turns on points of economics and ritual. In the gumsa system the chief receives certain perquisites from his followers in return for ritual services which he renders on behalf of the whole community; in the gumlao system the perquisites are reduced and the ritual functions of the leader (gaxi wa) are also reduced.

In my view the whole story with its mythology of traditional oppositions<sup>1</sup> can only be understood when viewed

1. The story is given in full mythological form by Kawlu Ma Nawng pp 10-15.

as forming part of the mechanics of social fission in a segmentary society. The type of society I have described, over a period of generations, will tend automatically to build up into an hierarchical pyramid with a paramount chief at the head and a series of subordinates. Simple segmentary fission will merely increase the depth of the pyramid, and must ultimately lead to a top heavy system in which the economic demands of the "bosses" are not equivalent to the services they render to the community. Basic fission (i.e., revolution) must then occur so that the system can be broken down again into its elementary segments. The gunsa/gunlao story may be read as providing the mythological sanction for precisely such a revolution. If this is a correct interpretation then a gunlao rebellion or the threat of a gunlao rebellion would be part of the normal social process whereby the size of Kachin political groupings was periodically adjusted to the changing stresses of external circumstances; correspondingly every major political readjustment in the total framework would appear as a gunsa gunlao feud.

It is not surprising therefore that in the Administration reports of the period 1900-1922 there are constant references to feuds between the gunsa and gunlao in the unadministered area in the Triangle, for these were certainly times when the balance of economic and political power in the unadministered areas was undergoing rapid readjustment. It is not



surprising either in view of Elliot's report that the British attitude to "Kumlae-ism" was one of unqualified disapproval.<sup>1</sup>

"In the case of the Kumlaos, the people must be told we cannot permit this headless condition, and that we insist on their placing at their head some responsible men as Akyi. This title of Akyi will be used solely in the case of Kumlae villages. If Kumlae villages will not appoint an akyi the village should be entirely disarmed and handed over to the nearest sawba or akyi likely to look after it."

This was perfectly logical and was in line with all other early administrative actions which were to stabilise the status quo. Thus, when areas were brought under administration, one of the very first acts of Government was always to fix village boundaries<sup>2</sup>, which thereafter were unalterable. In effect this meant that the segmentary fission of the local

1. General Instruction issued to the Civil Officers on duty in the Kachin Hills, season 1892-93 para 11

See Appendix to Burma, North East Frontier Report 1892-3

This was not just a passing phase. The official government handbook dated 1929 in a section headed "Advice to Junior Officers" has

"More than half a century ago, a spirit of republicanism manifested itself in the unadministered territory known as the Triangle and thence found its way to the west of the Mali Hka. Certain tribesmen who found the yoke of the Duwa irksome and were impatient of control, declared themselves in solitary villages of their own. The British Government steadily set its face against this movement and has declined to recognise Kumlae.... It will be found that in some subdivisions there have been no Duwas for years. Here each village will be found under its own Akyi. The mistakes of past years cannot now be rectified, and this departure from established custom must continue.

Caraplett(1) 161/2. My italics. It is always a good idea to identify "established custom" with administrative convenience!

2. R.N.E.F. 1892/3 Appx - Para 3.



community became well nigh impossible and at one stroke converted all households into the tied serfs of the Government approved headman or chief. "Stablising the status quo" was equivalent therefore to depriving the community of its traditional means of protecting itself against oppression by its rulers; these two traditional means being local fission - i.e., moving one's village elsewhere - and basic fission - i.e., rebellion.

If this interpretation of the gumlae-gumga opposition is correct it has a general application beyond the Kachin field. It may for instance explain how it is that throughout the whole region wherever "democratic" and "autocratic" political structures have been reported there seems to be a long standing traditional opposition between the two parties. The suggestion is that the relation is a shifting one; that neither side is permanently over any long period either markedly "autocratic" or markedly "democratic", but any excess of autocracy anywhere leads rapidly to crisis which breaks down in rebellion and a fresh orientation.

On this reading the interpretation of the Kachin gumlae movement as "rebellion" is rather overcoloured. The position rather is that any group which asserts its political

independence is for the time being gumlae vis a vis its former political overlords; but the process should be regarded as normal rather than abnormal.



This is well brought out by the following example. In the 30s of the last century the "Nagas" occupying the hills to the west of the Mukawng Valley, and also further north in Assam, to the west of the Pangsau Pass, were politically subordinate to the Singpho Kachins. We have contemporary evidence for this in the reports of Vetch, Hannay, Jenkins, Brodie and others.<sup>1</sup> Even as late as 1888 the inhabitants of this area were referred to as Singpho-Nagas,<sup>2</sup> with no clear division between the two. From 1840 onwards for reasons explained in Chapter VI the power of the Singpho in Assam declined sharply, enabling the Nagas on the north side of the Pat Koi Range to assert their independence. To the south however Kachin power declined much less. Even as late as 1930 most of the Nagas on the Burma side of the Patkoi freely admitted the dominance of Kachin influence.<sup>3</sup> It is

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1. "Selection of Papers, 1873"

2. Proc.R.C.S., 1888, p. 377 "Exploration of route between Assam and Burma."

3. Dewar(1) p. 267:

"At several places in the Naga Hills small Kachin settlements existed until quite a recent date, in fact at the time of writing a few households are living on the south west of the Sangpan Bum in the Namhpuk Valley, also in the north in the Tarung Valley. The original history of how these Kachin families entered the Naga Hills is unknown. That they exercised considerable influence over the Nagas is abundantly proved in the present day by the descendants of the original families, who although they live outside the Naga Hills, exercise a loose control over the Naga clans in their neighbourhood and also over several of the more distantly situated clans."

thus of interest to note that Needham who first explored this Naga region in 1888/91 categorised the inhabitants into two. Those to the south of the Patkoi he labelled Rengpan Naga and those to the north (on the Assam side) Gumlao Naga,<sup>1</sup> - thus accepting the viewpoint of the local Singpho Kachin chiefs.

This rather lengthy discussion of the "meaning" to be attached to the word gumlao has been necessary so that the reader should be able to understand that the Kachin polity is one and not two. Within the polity it is true there is a constant shifting of stress and emphasis - a flux of relationships - as first one group and then another assumes prominence, but the system, with all its variations, is of one type; the contrast between "democratic" and "autocratic" types of organisation arises because at any given moment these contrasts can be observed in the overall social continuum, but the contrast is not fixed. The villages that are part of a "democratic" order today may have been "autocratic" a generation ago, and may well be "autocratic" again before they are much older. The shift in political ideology required to turn one system into the other is very slight.

So far then the essential characteristics of the structure

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1. Brown G.E.R.C. (111), 35. quoting from a report by Needham which I have not traced. Proc. R.G.S., xiv, (1892) p. 405. is evidently based on the same report by Needham. Needham made an unsuccessful attempt to reach the Hukawng from Assam in 1888 but was successful in 1891.



I am described are tied up with the principle that segmentation can be readily achieved. For the Kachins gunlaq revolt is a traditional established mechanism for achieving segmentation at the political level; but we have still to see how the various types of local village community tie in with the segmentary kinship system discussed in an earlier section, and we have still to discover how far there exist social mechanisms for local fission of the community, which fall short of the drastic political readjustment implied by the gunlaq process.

#### Economic and ritual obligations in the gunsa autocratic organisation

The internal flexibility of the system can only be understood in terms of ritual, for it is through ritual that political groups are linked with the land and it is with the flexibility of such links that we are specially concerned. I shall describe first the gunsa system - that is the system which presumes the possibility of a chiefly hierarchy; the gunlaq or "democratic" modification of this will be considered later.

What I have to say here applies in detail to the Kachins and not to other areas. How far a similar pattern is carried over into other areas I simply do not know. It is not that

there is any lack of material on primitive religion among the hill tribes of the Burma-Assam area but that all of it is so fantastically biased as to be valueless. With few exceptions<sup>1</sup> the interpretation of primitive religion in this area has been left to missionaries, - on the grounds that they are the obvious experts on the subject.<sup>2</sup> The result naturally is like asking a die hard Tory to give an analysis of Russian Communism! The following passage by Warneck quoted with approval by Smith<sup>3</sup> indicates clearly enough the missionary approach

"Ghosts of most diverse kinds lurk in house and village; in the field they endanger the produce of his labour; in the forest they terrify the wood cutter; in the bush they hunt the wanderer. From them come diseases madness, death of cattle, famine. Malicious demons surround women during pregnancy and at confinement; they lie in wait for the child from the day of its birth; they swarm around the houses at night; they spy through the chinks and the walls for their helpless victims."

1. Hutton and Mills on the Nagas are among the exceptions but they usually so divorce religion from any other form of cultural activity as to make it incomprehensible in sociological terms. When Naga ritual is approached from a sociological viewpoint it seems to fall into the pattern here described for the Kachin. See Furer Haimendorf (vi)
2. See H.F. Hertz (1) p.156 footnote.  
"The Rev. Mr. Geis has been a missionary in these parts for many years and having seen a great deal of the Kachins of all descriptions is, in my opinion, better qualified than most men to write on Kachin belief and superstition."
3. Smith (1) p.74  
Warneck World Missionary Conference Report 1910, Vol. IV. p.2



In the gumsa system fealty towards political superiors can be expressed in a wide variety of ways. We must distinguish between

- (a) purely economic obligations based upon the "protection" provided by the overlord
- (b) economic obligations which, though ritually sanctioned, are in a sense reciprocal in that the donor gets a practical material return for his investment.
- (c) economic obligations, ritually based, on which the immediate return is very small.

The usefulness of this categorisation is that in a situation where local political influence is undergoing change there will be a differential effect on the constancy of payment of these different types of obligation. Type (a) will cease to be paid when the "protection" ceases to be effective; type (c) is likely to cease either if the obligations are raised too high, or if the prestige of the overlord noticeably declines; type (b) on the other hand being no real hardship on the donor is likely to be resilient to change.

Type (a) arises especially in those cases where Kachin Chiefs are "protecting" villages belonging to slightly differentiated cultures in which the ritual system of the group protected is not integrated with that of the protectors. Shans and Nagas under Kachin dominion fall into this category. Dewar quotes verbatim a Kachin view of such a situation which is of great interest<sup>1</sup>

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1. Dewar pp 277/8

For some cross references to the Lajawn see Chapter VI.p  
The place Dalu is sometimes written Taro and also Leyshi.



(Report by) Lawlawn Gen. Dawa of Lalawn Tract in the Dalu Valley. The Pyengoo Nagas are the only tribe of Nagas in my tract. We have been their overlords for the past four or five generations. I do not know how we came to be their overlords. It was during the time of the Mogaung Wa,<sup>1</sup> when the Hawseng ruled all the country. They are animists, who sacrifice buffaloes etc. Their nats are not the same as those the Chingpaw worship. I do not know what nats they worship.... We are also with other Kachin chiefs in the Dalu Valley, overlords of the Rase Nagas living on the hills. Like the others I also collect paddy from them. They also help at the building of my house and assist at our marriage ceremonies with opium and such riches as they can give us. When my son was married about five years ago they assisted by giving opium. This was when I requested them. They gave up to half a viss of opium, kham ma nga. When my son Nawng was married ten years ago, as I did not ask for anything from the Nagas, they did not assist at the marriage. We do not go up yearly and make demands from these Nagas, it is only when we are in want we make demands from them and they help us. They never refuse us they assist us as much as possible. When my son La was married over ten years ago, I invited the Lawlun and Kuku Nagas, and the Lawlun Nagas gave us instead of a buffalo 500 Indian Corn (Kawpa Lap) wrappings for rolling cigars. The Kuku Nagas gave us a bull. We sold the wrapping to a Shan at Dalu for a three year old buffalo.... Last year I visited Wakshang and Haken (Naga) villages and bought paddy there. I bought 20 baskets of paddy at the rate of three fourth basket for one rupee. I did not demand the paddy as the whole of the Dalu Valley was starving. We never had any pitched battles with any of these Naga tribes as they are our friends. It is now ten years since the Hkang Katsing have crossed the Namhpuk Kha and established a village at Htang Hkaw. They requested my permission to live on this spot and they gave me Rs100 and I gave them a dah.

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1. Mogaung Wa - i.e., The Shan Sawtwa of Mogaung (see Chapter 2 According to Kawlu Ma Nawng p.41 there were six Shan mong in the Hukawng Valley. The most important of these was Hkawseng which was in turn subordinate to Mogaung.
  2. Dewar writes "Kham Ma Nga" without explanation.
  3. Dewar has "the Lawlun Nagas gave us a buffalo instead 500 Indian Corn...." apparently misunderstanding the sense. It is clear that Lawlawn received the cigar wrappings and not the buffalo.



The emphasis on contributions to the Chiefs bride-price commitments is significant. Although the items (hnaga) which go to make up a Kachin marriage payment are somewhat numerous, the crucial ones, - the ones that clinch the deal and are economically onerous to the giver - , are the cattle. In the case of a Chief's eldest or youngest son it is usually ten beasts (naga shi). It is clear from the quotation that the Naga Nagas were under an obligation to contribute one beast or its equivalent to each Lajawn marriage; but the payment was not exclusively a political one. Dewar evidently did not understand the reference, but the payment whether of opium, or cigar wrappings, or a live buffalo was the equivalent of a beast, - the kanam na naga, - that is the contribution that a classificatory father's sister's husband (kagu) makes towards the bride price requirements of his classificatory wife's brother's son (kanan). In the terminology of Kachin kinship the Naga groups in question were evidently all dama to the Chiefs Lajawn lineage, i.e. in time past they had taken women from the Lajawn and established a kinship status. On demand therefore they were under an obligation, as groups, to contribute the bride-price obligations of their mayu ni - their affinal relatives

on the mother's side.<sup>1</sup>

We see therefore that even in this case where the initial tie is purely political, the obligations are expressed through the formula of kinship. Since however the Kachins and Nagas concerned do not share common rites; ritual is not directly involved.

Type (b) in our classification of obligations are those which, through being confined within the local community, yield some immediate visible return. Thus where there is a chief of a village cluster or of a single village there is commonly an obligation on all household to provide free labour on the chief's plot in the jungle clearing, at sowing, weeding, and harvest, and also possibly to contribute two or more baskets of paddy to the chief's household. There is, as we shall see in a moment, a ritual value in such action but it has a practical return. The members of the Chief's household, which formerly included numerous slaves, are available to join communal working parties (sa saw) on other plots. The Chief contributes substantially to the group feasting of the whole village by contributions of animals, rice and liquor.

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1. For further details of the ku/nam and mayu-dama relationships see my article Jinghpaw Kinship Terminology op.cit. The essential point is that a girl may not marry into her mother's lineage. A man's own lineage is thus related to other lineages in three possible ways (a) as of the same clan. kahyu-kanau (b) as mayu. A mayu lineage is any lineage from whom in the past a woman has been taken in marriage. (c) as dama. A dama lineage is any lineage whom in the past a woman has been given in marriage.



Furthermore the Chief must entertain free of charge all passing travellers; which rule since it is reciprocal throughout the hills is ultimately to the benefit of all.

But in the Kachin view none of these obligations constitute the really crucial test of Chieftainship. For the Kachin, the true test is in whether or not the chief in question is entitled to a thigh (magyi) of every animal killed. Stevenson has given some excellent accounts of the rules and implications of the division of killed meat among the Zahau Chins.<sup>1</sup> The corresponding rules among the various Kachin groups are at least as complicated, but here the chief's right to a hind leg is paramount to all other rights. Where the chief is a member of the local community, - i.e., where the hierarchy goes no higher than village cluster (mareng), - the contribution of the magyi need be no hardship because the Chief is likely to be a relative of the donor of some sort, and, as we have just seen, obligations within the community work out on a reciprocal basis one way or another. Where hardship comes in as in the case where the paramount chief, to whom the magyi is due, is external to the local community, so that the donor receives no obvious return in kind. It is here that we have my type (c) obligation. It is precisely here that the system is weakest, and it is here that the attack will come when for one reason or another political

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1. Stevenson (i), (ii), (iii), (vi.)

readjustment becomes necessary. Significantly therefore the crucial distinction between huma and suniao is that the latter do not contribute the thigh to their chiefs.

The magvi is not of course rendered to chiefs for nothing, but the return which the chief is expected to contribute is of a mystical rather than material order. The chief is deemed to have power to ensure fertility and prosperity. He does not possess this power directly but obtains it indirectly through the control of his ancestors. The ideology must be understood since it reflects the political and economic relationships of the living.

#### The Nature of the Chief's Title in Land.

Though we tend to speak of a chief's territory, the territory of a "thigh eating chief" (magvi sha ai du) may more properly be regarded as the territory of his lineage as a whole. The expression is anate a lamu ka - "our sky and earth", not my. As chief he is the senior of the living members of the lineage; but since the Kachins believe that the dead can readily be invoked to come and discuss matters with the living,<sup>1</sup> the dead are included in the

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1. The Kachin medium (myihtoi - lit. "bright eyes") has his counterpart in nearly all societies in this region. The Kachin myihtoi is always male; among the Nung often female. In Burma proper mediumship is more commonly female than male. The Kachins do not necessarily show any great awe for the opinions of the ancestors whom they consult, and debate with them very much as they would with any other respected elder of the village.



concept of "us". The symbol for this whole lineage is moreover not so much the person of the chief, as the "patron saint" of the lineage, - the mung nat -, "the nat of the tract territory." This mung nat (or nats) is an ancestor spirit in the Chief's own line, though not necessarily the actual founder of that line. So far as the chief is concerned this mung nat is a household spirit, a personal relative, and worshipped as such at his household shrine.

Every Kachin house, of commoners' and chiefs' alike, has its household shrine. The nats or nats there worshipped, - sometimes called sumgun or nats gun, - are spirits of immediate ancestors of the owners of the house, perhaps no more remote than a grandfather of those now living. Sometimes on the other hand, especially in aristocratic households, rituals exist for several different ancestors of varying remoteness, the more remote being in general the most powerful and least often invoked. <sup>1</sup> But whereas the household nats of the commonality are of no importance to anyone except the household itself and near relatives, the household nats of chiefs are the concern of all on account with their title of ownership in the land.

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1. Rose and Goggin Brown have noticed the general similarity between Yawin (Lisu) organisation and ritual and that of the Kachin but make the contrast

"Whilst the Chingpaw (Kachins) make offerings to ancestors who have been dead for many generations the Lisu confine their offerings to those with whom they have been personally acquainted...."

Actually however it is only the Jinghpaw aristocrats who have very "antique" ancestor nats  
 Rose (1), 266.

The household nats of a "thigh eating chief" are the uma nats of his lineage, that is, they are the "patron saints" of his lineage and power to control them can be passed by natural right only to the uma - that is the youngest son.

It would be logical no doubt if at each successive split in the lineage a new ancestor were added to the ritual hierarchy so that the hierarchy of nats would then perfectly represent the linkage of its lineage segments, and would thus reflect the segmented structure of the living social group. In practice however this is only true in very general terms. If, as we have seen, the living find much difficulty in sorting themselves into a coherent arrangement of exclusive clans it is hardly surprising that the status of nats is even more confused and contradictory. However, in any particular local area, the larger variations are irrelevant. Thus Hpunrau Tang, the uma of the Hpunrau-Layawng-Kadaw-Lahtaw lineage, believe that his household has the exclusive right within his lamu ka - the Kadaw-Lahtaw tract in the H/pungin-dung area - to make sacrifices to the Kadaw uma nats Hkinrang Nien and Kasang Nawng and that, because of this, he is feted whenever he visits a Kadaw village anywhere in the district. It is possible, indeed likely, that enquiries among other Kadaws, - say those living in the Sinlum Hills, would show that they had never heard of these two particular nats and



that they denied their existence either past or present. Inconsistencies of this sort, I fancy, are the norm rather than the exception. It must always be understood that there is no "correct" or "incorrect" version of a mythological construction. That version is locally correct which is locally accepted and acted upon.

#### Modes of acquiring ritual title.

The most orthodox way in which a chief may acquire his ritual powers is by direct succession in the line of ultimogeniture in his status as uma. The powers in question consist essentially in the ability to make effective offerings to three particular nats or types of nat, these being (i) the chief's uma nats, which are the uma nats - territorial nats - of his tract, (ii) madai nat - the uma chief of all the "celestial" (mu) nats, and (iii) shadin nat which is a manifestation of ga nat - the earth spirit - and of chyanun - a sort of fertility goddess, the mother of all the nats.

The right to make offerings to the uma nats is common to all members of the chief's lineage resident in his household. Thus, where a chief has two or more sons all inherit the right to make offerings to the uma nats, so long as they remain domiciled in the ancestral home. But it is the youngest son who inherits the status of chief, an invidious regulation which in pre-British days encouraged elder brothers to emigrate elsewhere. The emigrating brother can of course



merely go off and attach himself as an adherent to some other chief, but if he should wish to set himself up as an independent "thigh eating chief", he will have to move away into a completely different tract and then purchase from his youngest brother the right to make offerings to the uma and madai nats.

To understand this procedure it is necessary to visualise the nature of the household shrine. This shrine is a small unobtrusive bamboo shelf against the wall at the "living room" end of the house. Chiefs' houses in addition have a madai daw (madai hearth), a special room at the opposite end of the house where there is a somewhat similar shrine to the madai nat.<sup>2</sup> Stuck in the thatching of the roof above either of these shrines may be noticed one or sometimes two apparently unimportant small bamboo tubes closed at one end so as to be receptacles for liquid. These are the nat htawt - "the cups of the nat" - in which rice beer (ghyara) is offered to the nat on ceremonial occasions. These cups are carefully preserved despite their apparently neglected appearance. If a household changes its residence the nat htawt are carefully transferred to the new residence and ceremonially introduced to the new house. These nat htawt symbolise the unity and permanence of the household and its ancestral lineage. When the household splits, the tubes must be symbolically split at well<sup>1</sup> and new ones provided both for

1. The expression is nat htawt daw al, daw al might mean simply to destroy but as it also means "to split a bamboo" I conclude that the ceremony includes an actual ritual act of splitting



the old house and for the new. These new nat htegt I have been told should be taken to some senior household of the same lineage and there ritually replenished with sanctified liquor. Whether this is really done I have no means of judging but the symbolism is clearly to re-establish the chain of authority from the original source, the remote lineage ancestors, the uma nats.

The splitting of a chief's household is naturally a matter of much greater moment than the mere division of a commoner household; it should properly be accompanied by a large scale ceremonial and feast called gumran<sup>1</sup> manao<sup>2</sup>.

Leonard<sup>3</sup> reported on the matter thus:-

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1. The root ran means to divide off as in the case of a lineage segment. Thus the Maran clan are "those who have split off."
  2. Manao - any kind of a feasting ceremonial which includes the ritual dancing manao nso ai. The four traditional types of manao were (a) sut manao - wealth manao; a lavishly expensive feast held by individuals with a view to increasing their personal wealth and prestige. Corresponding in social and economic function to the "feasts of merit" of China and Nagas. The holders of such manao are commonly "thigh eating chiefs", but in any case the co-operation of such a chief is required in order to invoke the madai nat, the giver of wealth (b) ju manao - roasting manao, a similar feast given by a whole village community jointly. Again the co-operation of a "thigh eating chief" is required. (c) padang manao - victory manao The peace celebration at the end of a war. Particularly important where the purpose of the fight was the annexation of territory since the holding of the manao served to confirm the victors in their title; the defeated party contributed largely to the feast. (d) gumran manao - lineage splitting manao - see text.

Ref Carripiett (1) pp. 59/67 is the most detailed description.

3. Carripiett on p. 67 quoting Leonard, who in turn quotes Walter Scott, an early Assistant Superintendent at Simlum.



"The Kumran Manao which is held when a member of the chief's family leaves for a new country. It is intended to inform the spirits of the departure of the elder brother and to ask them to protect him in his new home. The elder brother who is departing presents the younger brother (or Uma) who, according to tribal law, is heir, with a buffalo, a gong, and a silk pasc. The Uma presents the elder brother with two spears, two daks a new woman's skirt and a bamboo tube to hold the liquor used at the worship of the spirits. The bamboo is wrapped in the silk pasc and is carried on the back by means of the womens skirts, - just as a baby is carried. By this means the elder brother will be enabled to call down the Madai nats and to hold Manao in his new home."

From this one might perhaps conclude that the bamboo tube thus conveyed is the nat htant of the madai nat from the madai shrine. But this is not the case. As we shall see in a moment the chiefs control over the madai nats is of great importance because they are the givers of general wealth and prosperity. But he controls them only indirectly. It is actually the uma nat that is supposed to have power to supplicate the madai. Provided control over the uma nat is retained indirect control over the madai will follow automatically. The nat htant that is conveyed to the new house at the Kumran manao is thus that of the chief's uma nat and not the madai.

This then is the orthodox procedure for the inheritance of control over the uma and madai nats, how far it invariably applies is another matter. Under the British dispensation the uma succession is inconvenient and the elder brother often succeeds; this is supposed to be unorthodox. Actually a



study of genealogies must quickly convince even the most prejudiced that it was common practice in the past as well.

Administrators in general it seems to me have made a mistake in supposing that "native law and custom" is something clear cut and defined. In the Kachin field I have never yet come across a single rule which was not paralleled by an "orthodox" technique for getting round it. There is a precedent for every rule and a precedent for the infringement of every rule, and which is right or wrong at any particular moment is a matter of politics rather than of law.

So far as succession to the chieftainship is concerned, ultimogeniture is usually the formal rule, though often circumvented. On the other hand among the Singpho Kachins (Tsasen) primogeniture is the rule though the youngest son reserves certain rights to property. The contrast therefore between Kachin succession and let us say the Chin rules as described by Stevenson<sup>1</sup> is very much less marked in practice than might appear at first sight.

#### The categories of Kachin Nats.

I have explained how the "thigh eating chief" inherits control over the uma and madai nats, though I have not yet explained his control over the shadin nat. I have also still not explained just how these various nats differ one

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1. Stevenson (vi) pp.167/174.

from another. Are they in fact, as the missionaries would assure us, merely an undifferentiated host of "evil spirits"?

Hannay,<sup>1</sup> writing in 1847, seems to have had as good a grasp as any of the principles involved

"Their religion comprises some confused notion of a Supreme Being and the propitiation of Mhats or spirits of which last there are three, - the Moo Mhat or Spirit above, the Ga Mhat or Spirit below, and another Spirit who is supposed to inhabit their houses...."

I am surprised, I must admit, that he thought he had found even a confused notion of a Supreme Being<sup>2</sup> but it was a good analysis to reduce all the rest of the concourse of spiritual beings with which the Kachin surrounds himself, to three crucial types. "The spirit who is supposed to inhabit their houses "we have already discussed; a whole world of ancestors is thus comprised, but it must be noted that each household

1. Hannay(11),4. Though there are several references to this work in the literature few people seem to have actually read it. It is now extremely rare. The only copy I have traced is in the India Office Library where it is catalogued under Hannah.
2. The Christian missionaries insist that the Kachins possessed a supreme deity called Karai Kasang. No-one except Christian missionaries has ever reported the existence of such a nat and today certainly it is merely the "nat of the Christians" To be a Christian is Karai Kasang jaw ai - "to give to Karai Kasang." One cannot of course be dogmatic on such a point but Karai-Kasang sounds to me very like Chri-stian; a direct derivation from the missionaries themselves. As French and English speaking missionaries were both in the field at much the same time it would be easy for them, in all innocence, to discover each others nats as indigenous Supreme Beings! Hannay's "confused notion of a Supreme Being" may have been Ghyannun; see text.



offers only to those nats who are considered to be its own ancestors, and not to those of other people. In contradistinction to this the mu nats (sky spirits) are the ancestors of all.

All the variant Kachin versions of the mythology of first causes that have been recorded have this at least in common, - all human clans pyramid back to a single point, the first man Ninggawn Wa Magam, who is himself, in some legends, the smith who "forges the earth". But the Ninggawn Wa is not only at the beginning of things, but also an end, beyond him into further misty layers of antiquity stretch further successive generations of "ancestors", the "celestial nats" (mu nat), the forefathers of all. Though for the most part they have names that seem to identify them with the elements of nature, Sky, Wind, Thunder-cloud, Sun, Moon and so on, their attributes are entirely human; they live in villages exactly like those of the Kachins, they own buffaloes and pigs and hens, they make sacrifices, they marry, they

(1)

have a gumao political hierarchy like that of their descendants, and their actions are the sanction for what is done on earth. All these "great spirits" are collectively mu nat and offerings may be made to them either collectively

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(1) There are also gumao mu nats.

or individually for a variety of purposes, and each has his appropriate ritual. But the paramount chief ming duwa, of all the du nats is Madai and it is characteristic of the manner in which heaven and earth are modelled one upon the other that only a true duwa may make offerings to him. His special function is to endow the chief with riches, and it is appropriate that the manao festival at which his honour is celebrated is the most costly enterprise which a Kachin chief may undertake. A chief's reputation rises in proportion to the number of manaos he has held and in this respect the Manao is comparable to the Feasts of Merit among the Nagas and Chins and the Bai Festival among the Chinese Shans.

So much for Hannyay's "Moo Hsat of Spirit above".

A further common feature of all the recorded variants of the basic mythology is that beyond Ninggawn Wa, the first man, but seemingly independent of the hierarchy of anthropomorphic du nats, there appear two shadowy male and female, or, perhaps one should say androgynous figures, Woishun - vaguely identified with the sky, and Chyanun or Janun identified with the earth. Sometimes they are the parents of Ninggawn Wa (1) with Woishun as the male. Kawlu Ma Nawnon the other hand makes Ninggawn himself appear as Ninggawn Chyanun while his

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1. Kawlu Ma Nawnon. op. cit. p. 1..



(1)

wife is Majan Weishun. George has a version which combines the two:- "the great original nat Chyanun Weyshun".

(2)

In Gilhodes' version Chyanun is a sort of supreme mother who first gives birth to all the great nats and then to Ninggawn and then "dies" and becomes Shadip - the earth nat - ga nat of the chiefs.

The point that I would stress is that this earth spirit, - ga or shadip or chyanun or whatever it may be called, is in an obscure way a different kind of being to the very human ancestor spirits we have discussed up till now. In a Burkheimian sense the ga nat ritual is extremely sacred. By that I do not mean that it cannot be mentioned but its details and procedures are hedged about with secrecy and (3) taboos in a manner that applies to no other Kachin ceremonial. It is for one thing the only spirit sacrifice which actually involves an economic loss, for all the meat of the offering is too dangerous to touch and is buried; in all other sacrifices in accordance with a convenient theory that the nats only need the breath or essence (tsa) of the offering, the meat having been offered to the spirits is taken back again and consumed by

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1. George (ii)
  2. Gilhodes (ii)
  3. The only other ritual which I know of which has any serious taboo or "genna" attached to it insignificantly, the madai nat ritual of the chiefs, at the end of which "the chief's wife and her husband quickly enter their own house with their (mystical) treasures (obtained from the madai nat) and securely fasten the N'pan door. For eight days the chief and his wife may not leave the house, nor may the N'pan door be opened on any account; otherwise the secured riches will vanish". Carrapiett op.cit

the community. An ordinary nat sacrifice is thus a communal feast; the ga nat ritual is too sacred for such frivolity. The two or four day holiday by which the sacrifice is followed is what in the Mgo hills would be called a genna. It is a holiday not in the sense of a jollification but because all work is taboo. The usual offering to the ga nat is made immediately before the first sowing in the <sup>4</sup> vi clearings and has the avowed purpose of ensuring a good harvest, it is a fertility <sup>RITE</sup> of a clear cut and classical type.

I have unfortunately never seen a ga nat sacrifice performed and published accounts do not indicate the precise relationship of the Chief to the rite. Since it is preceded by much flamboyant feasting and sacrificing in honour of various ancestor and "celestial" (mu) nats, the more important but less <sup>OBTRUSIVE</sup> ~~obtrusive~~ ga nat ritual may be missed. Actually a two day ceremonial corresponding to that described by George as Chikkawn Khawnai commenced at Hpalang a few days after my arrival; it was only afterwards that I learnt that the Chief had made an offering to the ga nat (shadip) on the late evening of the second day, long after all the festivities appeared to be over.

It must be understood that although the chief "controls" these various crucial nats he is not himself a priest. The priestly function at all nat ceremonies is performed by a



dumsa wa a non-hereditary professional expert in spells and procedure. There are several grades of dumsa wa; the lowest are qualified only to address household nats, a higher grade know the ritual of the minor mu nats and the chiefs uma nats, the highest grade - usually the jaiwa already referred to - are masters of all esoteric lore, and are called in for manao ceremonies and the like. It is I think the middle grade of these who is sufficiently competent to cope with the ga nat ritual.

As we have seen the various household nats and the masai nat have permanent shrines in the various houses. The less mu nats that are invoked by commoners have no permanent shrine but are invoked at temporary shrines erected outside the house of the people, making the sacrifice; alternatively on the occasion of joint village celebrations they are invoked at temporary shrines erected near the namshang, the "sacred grove" near the entrance of the village. This "sacred grove" is merely a small patch of reserved jungle on the path leading into the village, from which the trees are never felled. Often there is a giant peepal (figus religiosa)<sup>(1)</sup> or a banyan. In one form or another it is a feature that occurs among nearly all peoples of this region, whether of the hills or of the plains. Often, as in the

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(1) Often a figus elastica - the "India Rubber" tree.

See Sketell (1)

Burmese or Pa/laung villages, <sup>(1)</sup> it may be regarded as the house of the guardian spirit of the village, in which the functions of "sacred founder ancestor" and "fertility god", and "giver of general prosperity" are combined. In the Kachin ideology, of the gumsa pattern, these three roles are separate; the "sacred founder ancestor" is represented by the uma nat, the "giver of general prosperity" by the madai nat, and the "fertility god" by the ga nat (earth spirit). The uma and madai nats are housed in the chief's house; the ga nat has a permanent shrine - often an unobtrusive flat stone - in the namshang, the sacred grove.

When therefore large scale village celebrations are held at the namshang, with numerous sacrifices to ancestors and minor mu nats, the ideological significance will be lost unless it is remembered that all this is taking place at the door of the ga nat's house as it were. All the feasting and propitiation of minor spirits is but an indirect approach to the more sacred fertility god.

Indirect approach is a characteristic feature of Kachin standardised behaviour. In the past even the assassinations necessary in blood feuds were properly carried out by hired braves who were themselves disinterested parties. Marriage negotiations are not carried on directly but through

1. See Chapter V.



agents (kasa). A similar principle enters into many aspects of life, especially in approaches to authority. A commoner who wishes to contact an important chief is likely first to approach his Salang wa, the head of his own small local group, who in turn will make direct or indirect approach to his superiors. So also with the nats; a sacred and powerful nat is approached always by way of a lesser one. We have mentioned already the matat nat as chief of the mu nat hierarchy and available only to chiefs, but there are numerous other mu nats - Bungpoi, K'Bang, Jan Nat etc - who are available to commoners on occasion, but they are not approached direct. If a commoner needs, on account of sickness or other special circumstances, to make sacrifice to a mu nat, this ceremony will invariably be preceded by a lesser one in which the individual's own household (personal ancestor) nat is first approached. The role of the personal ancestor nats is not that they have great power in themselves, but that they may intercede with greater powers beyond them.

Similarly so far as the ga nat (earth spirit) known as shadip is concerned, the special role of the chief is his power to intercede with his own ancestor spirits; the uma nats through whom the shadip nat may be effectively approached. The ideological reason for this is that the uma nats are deemed to be the titular owners of the land, they are the mung nats, and naturally they have a close

relationship with the earth spirit. Indeed as we have just seen there is a tendency in neighbouring societies for the functions of mung nat and fertility spirit to coalesce.

Having thus discussed the logic of the ga nat ritual let us consider a description of it. The following passage from George describes a series of ritual procedures associated with the general theme of land fertility. (1)

"Each year before sowing time, the nat of the earth (Ka nat who is the same as the great original nat Chinun Wayshom) is worshipped by the Sawbwa on behalf of the whole village, who contribute offerings. The sacrifices take place at the "numshang" or general prayer place, outside the village on the road, in which a collection of bamboo shrines are usually found. Only the Sawbwa and the tunsa and the kyangjong (or butcher) may be present at the time of sacrifice, which usually takes place towards the evening, the villagers during the earlier part of the day having worshipped the collective nats at the "numshang". After the ceremony for four days no work must be done. After these days of ceremonial holiday (na na ei) the tunsa by divination, discovers which particular house of the village should start sowing first in order that the crop may be a good one. The members of this household go out, sow their fields and two days ceremonial holiday are again indulged in by the whole community.

A general feast and drink is indulged in on that night by the whole village and eggs, spirits, etc are offered to the nats to avert all damage to crops. Two days further ceremonial idleness follow, and thereafter sowing can be commenced indiscriminately.

Altogether there are six recognized holidays a year, when no one is supposed to do any work.



First. Two days after the Sawbwa's taungya hut is built. It is customary, owing to the vast distances of the hill clearings from the village, to erect little huts on the spot each year and to remove to the site of the clearing temporarily. On this occasion too the Ke nat is worshipped by the Sawbwa but with more private ceremony than on the later occasion mentioned above.

Second. Two days at the time of setting fire to jungle clearing.

Third. Four days at the time of the great Ke nat worship as noted above.

Fourth. Two days after the first sowing as described above.

Fifth. Four days, when the crop is ripening, at the time of the worship by the whole village of the whole pantheon of nats. Every household presents a distinct offering at the "namshang". This ceremony is termed Chikkawn Khawnai. The ripening crop is commended to the care of the nats in a body and all danger is thereby averted.

Sixth. Two days after the reaping of the Sawbwa's taungya which is done for him by the whole village.

This is a highly idealised version of the actual procedure that is likely to be encountered in any particular village in any particular year, and is probably only even approximately applicable to the south eastern corner of the Kachin area; but it gives an indication of the general ideology. It emphasises that the specially sacred occasions are linked with the critical phases in the agricultural cycle, and it emphasises the especially sacred and secret association of the Chief and the go nat.

### Minor categories of nats.

From the point of view of basic structure the classes of nat we have already considered are by far the most important. But there are others which do not fall into these categories, and are prominent in numbers if not in value, and must therefore be briefly considered.

The Kachin firmly believes that all ailments and accidents are caused by nats, these are the "evil spirits" so much talked of by the missionaries. Like the beneficent spirits already considered they are deemed to be of human origin, but the anthropomorphic nature is not stressed; often they seem to be thought of as little more than the symptoms of the disease for which they are held responsible. They are indeed elaborately classified according to the nature of the symptoms produced, and the Kachin attitude towards such nat rituals is similar to that of an 18th Century English physician towards his drugs. Each ritual is supposed to cope with a particular nat responsible for a particular group of symptoms; if it doesn't work, you try another one associated with a similar group of symptoms. The approach is almost experimental and scientific!

It will be sufficient if I merely give a chart of the principal categories of nat, - it must be understood that there are large numbers of individual nats in each class.



Table.

(1)

Categories of Kachin Nats.A. Beneficent Spirits.

1. Human ancestor spirits. (gumgaun nat; mashe nat)
2. "Celestial" spirits (ma nat)
3. Earth spirits. (ga nat)

B. Nates -(maraw)

Maraw are a curious category of nat which are directly neither "good" nor "evil". The ideology seems to be that the maraw are concerned to see that all ritual procedures are carried out in the correct way, that spells are correctly uttered and so on. When offended they avenge themselves by false rumour, scandal and the like. Accordingly the final act of every nat sacrifice great or small is an offering to the maraw, - to ward off the consequences of any mistakes that may have been made. By a slight enlargement of this ideology the maraw are deemed to be the powers that give effect to sorcery and curses and are possibly appealed to with this malign end in view. The maraw of sorcery are commonly known as matsa maraw. The maraw of gossip and slander as kajai maraw. The special feature of all maraw is that they are outside the control of the mu nats. For the role of the maraw in judicial procedure see Chapter VIII.

C. Evil spirits - responsible for illness, accident etc,

1. Spirits of those who have died by violence - (lase nat)
2. Spirits of women who have died in childbirth - sawn
3. Goblins, Sprites etc. - ishtung, bun nat.

D. Witches - hpyi

The Kachin witch is deemed to be unconscious of his lamentable qualities. It is thus no defence for one

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1. This table is a synthesis of information based on personal observation and the reports of Hanson, Gilhodes, Geis and Carapiett.

accused of witchcraft to plead ignorance. Witches formerly were driven from the village and/ or sold as slaves; not, I think, killed. Presumably only the very unpopular proved to be witches. The word hnyi seems to be borrowed from the Shan where it was the wider meaning of nat.

### Summary of Chief's ritual status.

This lengthy excursion into the ideology of nat worship may seem to have led us far from our original discussion of structure, but it has explained the ritual basis in which the reciprocal obligations of the gunsa organisation have their root. The "thigh eating chief" gets his mayi (thigh) because in his house alone are to be found the shrines of the uma nat and of the madai nat. The great feasts in which he will honour the madai nat, will benefit the community as a whole not only theoretically - (Madai being the giver of riches) - but actually since the surplus wealth of the Chief is then distributed as food among the group as a whole. Through the uma nat the Chief derives his title to his territory - lamu ga - and also political links with other tracts elsewhere owned by the same lineage as defined by their control of the same uma nat. Through the uma nat again the Chief alone has power to intercede with the supremely sacred fertility spirit, - the ga Nat sometimes called shadip. The ga Nat ritual is vital and essential for the success of the crops of the whole community. The dues



paid to the Chief in the form of magyi or labour are therefore reciprocated through the power of the uma Nat.  
Ritual organisation among the gumlao (semecretic group)

Before carrying further our analysis of the gmsa chief's status, it will be as well to turn aside for a moment to examine how the ritual system just described is modified by the republican gumlao.

To be candid the evidence on this point is very defective. I myself recorded the fact that the Duleng gumlao in the northern Hkshku area had a mung nat named Kindu Nat, apparently regarded as an ancestor of the somewhat fictitious "Duleng Clan". At Newngkhai Duleng village the shrine of this nat was in a clump of bamboos some 100 yards from the village, which apparently served as the equivalent to the normal numshang. How far this mung nat also comprised the role of earth spirit I did not discover. Carrapiett has described a ga nat ritual closely similar to that described by George, with the seemingly slight difference that no  
 (1)  
 chief is mentioned as having a part in it.

"As the name implies this nat (Ga Nat) aspertains to the earth, so an annual offering is made once a year by the whole village before the paddy is sown in the taungyas with the object of securing a good harvest. This is an important duty which is never omitted ..... The Mingwawt (diviner) or Myitwe (spirit medium) having announced that, for instance a pig will be a

suitable offering, the villagers bring one to the entrance of the village where a circular area of ground is cleared of weeds and grass. Inside the area only the Tumsa, Khinjawang and Hpinlikin may enter .... When baked the flesh is emptied from the bamboo and with suitable invocations by the Tumsa for a good harvest is offered to the nat. A pit is then dug and the baked meat buried. The remainder of the flesh and the entrails etc. are buried in a separate pit uncooked. No one may eat of it .....  
 ..... The officiating Tumsa and Khinjawang have necessarily soiled their hands with blood during the operations but they may not wash them in any way for the following periods:- Two days, if a fowl has been offered; four days if a pig; and eight days if a buffalo. During this period they use spoons in eating. For similar periods no avoidable work may be done in the village e.g. no paddy may be pounded for rice, no firewood may be collected no one moving about the village may use a torch, and no one may pay visits to friends and relatives..."

The omission of all mention of the chief from this description is intentional, for elsewhere he makes a clear distinction between this ga nat and the shadip nat of the  
 (1)  
 chiefs.

"The Shadip, like Ga, is a terrestrial nai but while a commoner may offer to the latter only, chiefs may offer once a year to the former .... Liquor is offered at this sacrifice, but it must be liquor which the chief's wife has personally prepared. No other liquor will be accepted."

From this I conclude that Carrapiett's description of a ga nat ritual is based upon an occurrence in a gunlee (chiefless) village ... But that does not get us very far.

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1. Carrapiett op.cit p.79.



My own inference is that the ideology generally remains that the ga nat can only be approached through the intercession of the mung nat. But whereas, in the gansa system, the mung nat is to be identified with the chief's uma nats, among a gumlao group such as the Duleng, the mung nat is conveniently made the ancestor of all. Thus any Duleng village, whatever may be the individual lineage names of its inhabitants, can make an offering to the Duleng mung nat, and, through that nats, to the ga nat. It is only one step from this to an ideology which consolidates the concept of mung nat - territorial owner and protector - and ga nat - giver of fertility - into one spirit.

The point I would stress here is merely that while at first sight it appears that the ga nat ritual of the "thigh eating chiefs" has a neat "sociological function" as providing a sanction for the chief's authority, it needs only a very slight shift in ideology for a virtually identical ritual to serve quite a different function in a gumlao village.

#### The political status of chiefs.

Earlier in this chapter we noticed that the overt  
 RR  
 demographic ~~attangement~~ arrangement varied from small isolated villages (gahtawng), through village clusters (marang), to regular tracts (mung). The Jinghpaw word mung, translated tract in the official literature is the Shan word mong - "a

country". Small Shan States consist of a single mong under a Sao-hpa (Sawbwa); larger Shan States are in effect a confederation of a large number of mong each under an hereditary leader (hta-mong) with the Sao-hpa as paramount. The parallelism between Kachin and Shan structure is very close. There were cases in North Hsenwi where, before the annexation, Kachin chiefs (mung duwa) actually held the rank of hta-mong in the Shan State. The same seems to have been true in the earlier Shan States of Bhamo and Mogaung. Even after these states were liquidated by the Burmese the Burmese continued to award to Kachin Chiefs titles such as they would have received as petty Shan Sawbwas or hta-mong.<sup>1.</sup>

From this it should be inferred that the Shan and Kachin political structures are identical, but that between the variants of the two types of local organisation there is a considerable overlap. In the Shan order the mong stands not only for the subdivision of a Sawbwas state but also for the state itself. Such states vary enormously in size. Pre-British Hsenwi had an area of about 9,000 square miles and a population of over 200,000; Nam Tok in the Myelat has

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1. For evidence see below Chapters VI and VII; Selection of Papers, 239; Anderson, (ii), 57, 393; Kewlu Ma Nawng (i) 40; Scott, (vi) under Mong Si, Mong Ya, Mong Mo, Mong Htam etc.



an area of 20 square miles and a population of about 800. (1)

But there is a strong tendency for smaller states to imitate the forms and procedure of the larger. Thus while the Heng or Hta-mong in a state such as Hsenwi might rule (2)

over a substantial domain, the corresponding official in a small state would be little more than a village headman.

Sladen visiting the small Chinese-Shan states of the Taiping Valley in 1868 translates the term tamon as village headman. (3)

But while the Kachin mung and the Shan meng overlap in the scale of political organisation, there is one striking difference between the two forms. Kachin political structures when they become at all large, that is whenever the human content exceeds three or four thousand persons, appear to be intrinsically unstable; the tendency for gunsa structures to break up in gunlao rebellions is a symptom of this. In the next chapter we shall see that this instability may be correlated with basic factors in the economics of food supply but for the moment let us consider only the mechanics of the instability.

At the present time of course there is no question of either stability or instability. Chiefs are today merely the appointees of Government; as such their status is very

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1. Scott (11) 484, 495.

2. Ibid - 255.

3. Sladen (1)

different from anything that can have prevailed in pre-annexation days. In the first place, the Government appointed chief is completely irremovable, except at the arbitrary behest of the Government itself, whereas in the old days there was always the possibility of a gumlae revolt, or of defeat in war. Secondly his status vis a vis other chiefs is precisely defined, along with the precise boundaries of his territory. This is altogether an innovation.

In a segmentary society operating free of external control there is a normal tendency for some lineage branches to expand and then split up to form new territory owning units, while others may die out or shrink. Land tenure in a segmentary society may thus be expected to be subject to considerable flux. The British Administration however establishes village boundaries rigidly; new villages may only be established with official permission and such permission is sparingly given. (1) It still remains possible for a single household to split, and for part of it to establish a new residence in some other village already existing, but it becomes very difficult for a chief's household to split in the manner I have described, with two new uma households stemming from the old and both having territorial jurisdiction.

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1. Carrapiett op.cit p. 95 para 21. note.



But if we ignore this artificial stabilising effect of the Administration it is clear that there is a certain innate instability in the pattern as it exists at any given moment. There is historical evidence for this assertion. There is no reason to suppose for example that the Singphos of Assam of the period 1825-1845 were not very "typical" Kachins of the period, yet the contemporary literature reveals the very striking instability that generally prevailed, first one chief and then another is in ascendancy, the combinations and recombinations of local groups provide a constant flux of kaleidropsopic variation. Yet paramount chiefs (mung duni) were still thrown up from time to time even though their status and tenure of office was precarious in the extreme. The celebrated Duffa Gam, "King of the Hukawng", whose activities put a strain on Anglo-Burmese relations in the period 1834-39 is a case in point; (1) Kansi La the Chief of the Jade mines area at the time of the annexation in 1885 is another; or again the Thana duwa whose power was broken by military force in 1889, or the Laika Maran confederation in the Northern Shan States (N.Hsenwi).

These paramount chiefs of the pre-British regime represent the ideal type of Kachin mung duwa which should

See below, Chapter VI.

be distinguished from the tract chief as he exists under the modern artificially stabilised conditions. If the limitations imposed by the British administration be ignored the mung can be seen to have a clear out structure.

In gunsa country, a mung might be defined as "a continuous area, in which all the "thigh eating chiefs" are of the same clan". In some cases there is a mung duwa who is chief paramount over all the petty chiefs in that area but more usually there are a number of separate chiefs within a single mung each being representative of a different sub-clan, - or as Evans-Fritchard would say "maximal lineage". It is unorthodox for there to be more than one completely independent chief of the same lineage within the same mung; on the other hand where there are several chiefs of the same lineage within a single mung they are likely to recognise one of their number as paramount, namely the chief of the uma branch. On the other hand, while the chiefs throughout the mung belong to the clan which gives its name to the mung, the bulk of the population are probably not of that clan at all. The headmen (salang) of individual villages may be of the same clan as the chief, but it is more probable that they are related to him by marriage, that is either as dama or mayu.<sup>(1)</sup>

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1. dama "lineages of classificatory father's sister's husbands"  
 2. mayu "lineages of classificatory mother's brothers."



Some examples will illustrate these points.

In the Maran mang east of Sinlum in the Rhamo Hills there is no single paramount chief, but there are "thigh eating chiefs" (magyi sha al du) of at least three Maran "Maximal lineages" namely N'mwe, Npakawn, Laga; perhaps also there are others. Each of these "thigh eating chiefs" has a sector of the mung as his territory which he terms his lamu ga. Within that lamu ga all the inhabitants whatever their clan are the adherents of the chief concerned. Thus the village cluster of Npalang described at the end of Chapter 2 is, from the Maran point of view, N'mwe lamu ga and all the inhabitants of the Npalang ridge ought to admit the overlordship of the N'mwe chief. In point of fact they do not do so; some of the reasons for this discrepancy are given below in Chapter VIII. However if we consider only the three Jinghpaw villages in this cluster Laga, Maran and Gumjye (Nos 7, 8 & 9) we find that the principal lineage groups are respectively N'hkum-Laga, Maran-N'mwe, Maran-Gumjye. The N'mwe and Gumjye lineages are both "thigh eating chiefs" in the Maran clan. Laga are of aristocratic (ma gam amyu) but not chiefly status in the N'hkum clan. N'mwe and Gumjye regard each other as classificatory brothers. Laga are lamu to N'mwe and mayu to Gumjye. Originally - up to about 1914 - all three groups admitted the overlordship of

the N'mwe chief, and all three groups shared a common namshang, but the Gumjye being Maran and of equal blood status to the N'mwe did not pay any thighs to the N'mwe chief; the Laga paid their thighs to N'mwe .

Later owing to a quarrel Gumjye split away and set up their own namshang - which was legitimate since their lineage was of chiefly status, but the Laga continue to share a namshang with N'mwe and to pay thighs.

The issue is further confused by the fact that the Government refused to recognise the legitimate N'mwe chief and appointed another N'mwe in his place. In practice the villagers ignore this and pay their dues to the legitimate chief, the "appointed" chief only becoming prominent when a Government Officer visits the area.

Though the pattern is complex it is fairly characteristic of the southern part of the Kachin Hills (Singraw Ga); that is to say the territorial disputes and political fissions occur in respect to populations of the order of 300 persons. In the north the domains of individual chiefs are much larger.

In the South Triangle which is almost entirely Lohpai mung, but comprises both gumsa and gumlee areas, almost the whole of the gumsa portion is controlled by a single chief Shadan Tu, the senior chief of the Lohpai-Shadan maximal lineage. In area and population this domain is a sizable



(1)

State but the control exercised over its constituent parts is of a very loose kind and based entirely on kinship.

Almost all other "thigh eating chiefs" in the South Triangle are also members of the Shadan lineage, and they recognise Shadan Tu as their paramount.

This differential in the size of the gumlae political aggregates as between the northern and southern parts of the Kachin area is partly due to British administrative action in the early days of the annexation. While Government disapproved of the gumlae movement as tainted with rebellion, it also took military action to break up any large Kachin political confederation.

At the same time to get a full picture it must be remembered that in all parts of the area at any one time there are localities where the gumlae convention prevails and where, for the time being anyway, there is little or no aggregation of single villages into village clusters or larger units of political organisation.

A point that needs to be stressed, but which is already implicit in my account of the very polyglot composition of Kpialang, and of the Lajawn Chiefs' relations with his Naga adherents, is that the boundaries of a Kachin mung (or of a Shan mung) are not necessarily cultural boundaries. This

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1. Perhaps 15,000 persons.

is as true of the central core of the Kachin area, the Triangle, as it is of the outlying fringes where some cultural confusion is to be expected. Mashaw Uma Law an eminent <sup>^</sup>Mrip Chief of the North Triangle controls two tracts (mung), which are nearly contiguous, known as (1) Mashaw Uma and Mashaw Wei Wang. A note copied from a demi-official memorandum remarks that he is

"the bluest blooded Kachin; is very influential and controls the Mashaw Uma and Mashaw Wei Wang tracts in the triangle. He is very influential over all the Mung tracts in the N.E. Triangle ... controls 60 villages."

Sixty villages in Kachin country cover a large area! By my reckoning most of these sixty must be inhabited by Nungs.

It may be noted that Government officers writing of instances of Kachin dominion over Nungs, or Kachin dominion over Nagas, accept the situation as natural.. When however in the past they have encountered instances of Kachin dominion over Shans or Assamese, they have waxed indignant and written viciously of "slavery", extortion", "brigandage", "disregard for law" etc. etc. The distinction has had important consequences; it is partly psychological, partly political. Psychological because the Shans and Assamese are regarded as "civilised" and it is therefore "immoral" that

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1. Information supplied to C.N. Molloy Esq by J.L. Leyden Esq; both being officers of the Burma Frontier Service.



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they should be ruled over by "savages" political, because no one cares much who has the right to protect (and therefore tax) poverty stricken Nungs and Nagas, it is another matter when the question is who shall have the right to tax prosperous Assamese and Shans. The latter represent a perquisite that must be reserved for the central revenues. A result of this attitude has been a refusal to face the facts as to the past political interrelationships of Kachins and Shans. It is insisted that the two groups were entirely distinct and permanently hostile, because it is felt that they ought to have been! Curiously enough if Shans are found controlling "primitives", as in parts of the Shan States, this is considered entirely right and proper!

I have said a good deal concerning the upper levels of the gumga hierarchy, sufficient anyway to explain the wide variations in the scale of authority exercised by different Kachin chiefs and also the manner in which the chiefs of different localities tend to hang together in a loose (and somewhat unreliable) alliance along lines of kinship, firstly through the bonds of common ritual shared by all chiefs of any major lineage, and secondly through the bond of common clanship normally shared by all the chiefs of any particular mung. Kinship at the clan level serves to bind together the clan chiefs of a particular locality regardless of lineage; kinship at the lineage level

serves to combine chiefs from different localities, and also to justify a hierarchy of chiefs where such exists.

Nevertheless so long as Pax Britannica can be enforced by the external Authority, political combination between chiefs on the lines indicated has a negligible utility.

I shall now consider the less aristocratic levels of the gumasa organisation which in some ways have a greater relevance in the present day "given situation" of an administered territory.

#### Lineage linkage at the level of village and village cluster.

We have seen that, apart from the complication of paramountcy, the typical gumasa chief's dominion is a village cluster, the individual villages of which may be either dispersed or grouped closely together. The headman of the chief's own village is the chief himself; the headmen of subordinate villages are "elders" (salang). The chief and the village elders jointly form the governing council of the village cluster. This community council is actually somewhat wider than is here implied; it is commonly referred to as du salang ni myit su ni (chief, village headmen, wise men). In practice nearly all elderly men of good family are included in the category of myit su - "wise men". Age and wisdom are presumed to be synonymous.

A single village (nahkawng) seldom contains more than 30 households; more often, if Government does not interfere,



the number is around 10 or even less. The core of these households are members of the lineage of the village headman or else of closely affiliated lineages of the same clan. The village headman derives his title by right of hereditary succession in the line of the "founder" of the village. I shall thus call this lineage of the village headman, (or of the chief in the case of the chief's own village), the "core lineage" of that local group. The members of it are, in kinship terms, classificatory brothers (kahru kanau) of the village headman and comprise his zaw or personal followers.

Such core lineages are normally "aristocratic", (ma sam amru), not necessarily of any very obvious chiefly origin, but with some pretensions to a high born ancestry, respectable, not slaves. In addition there are likely to be one or more groups of households of similar general status to the first, but of quite distinct lineage and linked to the first by ties of marriage.

I have explained elsewhere<sup>1</sup> how the "asymmetrical" marriage rule which approves of the marriage mu/nam (father's sister's son/mother's brother's daughter) but vetoes the marriage hkri/tsa (father's sister's daughter / mother's brother's son) results - or tends to result - in a local grouping, in which, in any given cluster of local lineage groups, any

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1. Leach (1).

pair of such lineage groups are likely to be related, either collaterally as agnates of a common ancestor, (i.e., as clan brothers, kahou kanau), or else affinally as mayu dama, the later relationship being one in which the dama (the father's sister's husband's group) are entitled to take brides from the mayu (the mother's brother's group) but not vice versa.

In the typical village therefore, around the core lineage composed of households which are all clan brothers, there may adhere others which are mayu or dama. In the cited instance in Npalang for example N'hkum Laga were dama to N'm<sup>w</sup> and mayu to Gumjye.<sup>1</sup> Also in the case of the Lajawn Chief and his Nagas, the Nagas were dama to the Lajawn. The first stage of accretion is usually for a core lineage to acquire adhering households which are dama to itself. This arises from the economics of marriage.

The practice of a young man "working off" his bride price or a part of it by contributing labour to his wife's parents seems to be general to most parts of the area; it has been specifically reported both from the Sinlun Hills and the Mwakung. Such a custom results temporarily or permanently

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1. The ~~Gumant~~<sup>Nut</sup> and Gauri groups were not however kin to the Maran and N'hkum. For reasons discussed in Chapter VIII Npalang was an atypical village cluster being divided into two camps by an age old feud. Up to 1940 very few marriages had taken place across the feud barrier - largely as a consequence of action taken by the British Administration in 1898. Generally speaking it may be taken as a rule that neighbouring groups which are not closely related are hereditary enemies.



in a matrilocal marriage; the young couple, residing in the village of the wife's parents, are dama to that group, and if the residence is maintained into later generations there will grow up a small subsidiary lineage group that is dama to the original core. The accretion of navu groups is less likely directly but may result as a secondary development. Thus if a small group B adheres as dama to a core group A and in turn a further group C adheres as dama to group B; then there is a marked probability that C will very quickly establish direct marriage relations with the core group A. This may sound rather theoretical but in a detailed study of marriages made in Hpalang I found the ratio of probability very high indeed. It is, after all, a very natural result. In the first place the most convenient marriage is a local one, provided it does not transgress incest conventions, and in the second, since the land tenure rights and political power rest in the lineage and person of the village headman, there is every incentive for adhering households to establish direct kinship relations with that central core

Contrast between Village and Village Cluster one of Scale only

The composition of the village (gahtawng) and the relationship between its component parts and its head have now been described. In general the relationship existing within the village cluster between the lineages of the component villages and the lineage of the chief are analagous to this; that is to say ~~that~~ the core lineages of the various villages are bound to the core lineage of the chief by bonds of kinship either as component lineages of the same clan or else affinally in myu-dama relationship. Viewed as a diagram of segments, the village cluster with its component villages is merely a large scale version of the village with its component households.

Indeed I have already assumed this in my argument since I have treated the villages of the Hpalang village cluster as if they were the component elements of a single village.

The Class structure of Kachin Society: Slavery.

Garrapiett quotes Barnard for the opinion that there are four classes in traditional Kachin society

- a) The Du or Chief class
- b) The Darat or Commoner class
- c) The Suraung - who are children of a free man by a slave woman
- d) The Mayan or Slave class

Slavery was officially abolished in 1926 so that it is of interest that in 1943 a well born Christian educated Kachin remarked to me, without noticing any inconsistency, "all men



are either du daw (chiefs), na gam anyu (aristocrats) or mayam (slaves)". Both these classifications are correct:-

the first represents class as an expression of political and economic status, the second expresses the kinship basis for that status. These classes must not be confused with caste in its Indian sense. It is clearly recognised that families may slide up and down - especially down - the social scale. I have mentioned already how the na gam anyu base their claim to respectability upon their kinship with chiefs. When that kinship connection becomes remote they are darat - commoners. Hanson<sup>1</sup> quotes an interesting sentence to illustrate the meaning of the verb gunyu yu ai - "to slide down the social scale." Dashi ni shavna e Lahtaw du rai na ai; dai hrang e gunyu yu mat ai - "Formerly the Dashi family were chiefs in the Lahtaw clan, but later on they slid down the social scale." Today Dashi are very definitely darat. Probably all families can make such claims; whether or not they are aristocrats (na gam anyu) depends upon whether other people accept them!

What has been said already in this chapter applies in a general way to chiefs and aristocrats and commoners alike. The mayam, the slaves, however need separate consideration.

The use of the term "slave" in an unqualified sense as a description of mayam is unfortunate, but unavoidable in

1. Hanson (1) under gunyu.

view of the unanimity of the literature. Bond-slave might be a better word. Very similar institutions were in the past the norm throughout Burma. Fr Sangermano<sup>1</sup> writing of the Burma of the latter part of the 18th Century has

"...The slaves are... treated as children, and as forming part of the family of their masters; indeed it is not a rare thing for them to become the sons in law of their master. But it must be remembered that slavery is not for life in these parts. If a man can save sufficient to pay the debt for which he was enslaved he becomes free. It often happens that a man will sell his children or his wife or even himself, to pay the taxes and imposts, though these transactions should be looked upon as pledges than sales, as the slavery thus entered into is never perpetual."

A somewhat similar system in the Chin Hills has recently been most brilliantly described and analysed by Stevenson<sup>2</sup> under the name of tafa; a system, incidentally, which also has at times in the past been labelled "slavery". In Stevenson's handling tafa becomes a basic element in the credit structure of the community. The following instance shows that among the Kachins too, the mayam system could be interpreted as a method of loan guarantee. Fritchard<sup>3</sup> travelling among the Maru in 1911 encountered a youth of sixteen

"who had been a slave in the Kachin country for two years. His people had sold him originally for a coat and cooking pots. He had nothing but good to say for his Kachin owners and was found to be more useful, probably because the two years away from his own people had enlarged his mental horizon. Fritchard asked him why he

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1. Sangermano (1)
  2. Stevenson (vi), 177/181
  3. Fritchard (1), 530.



did not run away from his Kachin masters and he replied that in the first place he had no wish to do so, as he was very well treated, and in the second his own people who had sold him had told him that sooner or later they would buy him back.

To which I can add a story of my own. In 1943 encountering a singularly disgruntled old man from the Mukaung Valley, I enquired why he seemed to dislike the British Government so much, he replied frankly that he was by birth a slave (mayan); all his childhood and youth had been spent in the great long house of his master a powerful chief in the Mukaung; everything was prosperous, life was very good, the slaves were the children and grandchildren of their masters (duni a kashu kasha); and then the British came along and bought all the mayan (they paid Rs300 a head!); and they were turned out of the Mukaung and sent to live in the Htingnai where everyone died of malaria, while at home in the Mukaung all was ruined, there was no labour to till the fields, and no longer any point in building the great houses which used to be the pride of the chiefs, and the home of their mayan. Clearly the Government were the father and mother of all misfortune!

Unfortunately although Kachin "slavery" has been more written about than any other single feature of the society, the institution itself has never been adequately described, and it is far from clear how the system actually worked.

Almost the very first action taken by the British after establishing contact with the Kachins (with the Singphos in

Assam in 1825) was to "release the slaves." Neufville<sup>1</sup>, with spectacular eclat, released "over 6,000 + a surprising number in all conscience - and thereafter the process of slave release continued spasmodically for another century without anyone ever bothering to find out just what it was that was being released!

The following passage from Hertz<sup>2</sup> at least makes it clear that the usual status of the "slave" was not such as to bring tears of pity to the eyes of elderly British matrons.

"Many slaves are treated with great consideration and kindness and allowed such complete freedom as to be practically free men in all but name. They are frequently permitted to proceed to trade or earn money as labourers (coolies) long distances away from the scene of their captivity and where they could, if they were disposed to do so, effect their escape without the remotest chance of recapture, but such men are usually perfectly contented with their lot and have no desire to be severed from the families of their masters to which they have become genuinely attached, being to all intents and purposes members of the same. The earnings of a slave circumstanced as above are as a rule shared equally by master and slave."

~~Hertz 149, 7~~

Even Neufville<sup>3</sup> seems to have considered that Kachin slavery was only vicious if the persons enslaved were non-Kachins.

"When in their own country and before the plunder of Assam furnished them with slaves they appear to have cultivated their lands and carried on all the other purposes of domestic life by means of a species of voluntary servitude entered into by the poorer and more destitute individuals of their own people who when reduced to want were in the habit of selling themselves into bondage either temporally or for life to their chiefs or more prosperous neighbours. They sometimes resorted to this step in order to secure wives of the daughters and in either case were incorporated

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1. Mackenzie (1), 65
  2. Hertz H.F. (1) 149
  3. Neufville (1) 340.



into the family performing domestic and agricultural service but under no obligation. Singphos in this state were called gumlao....."

This interesting passage shows the resemblance between the system described to Neuville and that with which Fr. Sangermano was familiar in Burma. It also provides the first mention of the word gumlao <sup>USED</sup> apparently ~~is used~~ <sup>FF</sup> in the sense of mayam. Neuville's informant was Bessa Gam<sup>1</sup> a prominent gumasa with a long standing feud against the gumlao of the Hukawng, which presumably provided the explanation of this use of the term. George's<sup>2</sup> view, sixty years later, though reflecting the general prejudice against the system as a whole, suggests that more than one institutional arrangement was involved.

"Slavery is prevalent. The market in former times was supplied by the constant raiding that went on. In fact the stronger would always take the weaker and sell him as a slave. But recently the inhabitants of a village in Thana, regarding a certain household in their community as useless and a nuisance, seized and sold them. So long as the slave behaves well he appears to be treated with uniform kindness. He is an integral portion of the household and works side by side of, and just to the same extent as his master. Of course refractory slaves are deprived of food or beaten, but never so as to be really injured, for a slave is a valuable article. Now that we have shut off the main source of supply from the Shan-Burmese villages in the plains, and are putting down raids as our hold over the hills extends, he is likely to become more and more scarce and valuable than ever. A slave could always be redeemed by his friends either by ransoming him or by the easier method of seizing one of the aggressors household and effecting an exchange."

1. See Chapter VI.

2. George, op.cit.



"A male slave can marry a free woman, though of course only of the lowest and poorest class. The offspring are slaves to the slave's master. A woman slave can be demanded in marriage by any free man. He does not buy her because that would reflect on his offspring, but he makes offerings to the slave girl's owner, who is regarded as his father in law. For a man to have intercourse with his own female slave is said to occur very rarely if ever. A personal enemy, when captured unless sold off at once into distant slavery, is usually put into stocks and not allowed to roam about freely..... Luckily these cases are rare, the relations usually ransoming the slave at an early date."

The organised "Abolition of Slavery" in the period 1926-28 was a political gesture in which the reputation of the Governor of Burma, was deeply involved, so that it is highly significant that even in the official report on the subject to the Slavery Convention of the League of Nations passages should occur which suggest that the released slaves had been better off as they were.<sup>1</sup>

"The condition of the slaves released during the previous season was found to be on the whole satisfactory. Owners had in some cases tried to keep slaves in their power by lying about the intentions of the Government, and some of the slaves remained with their old masters, as they did not fully realise the effect of their release. The condition also of many of the slaves at the time of their release was such that it was not possible for them to take immediate advantage of their freedom; those connected with the more powerful chiefs found it easier to stay on with their late owners than to set up for themselves..... It is satisfactory to note that many ex-slaves are settling down in their old villages, so that economic conditions will be disturbed as little as possible."

All this hardly suggests that the "slaves" were a heavily exploited section of the community..

1. League of Nations Document A.24(a)1928.VI.(25.8.28)p.2.



There can be no doubt that before the official Abolition of Slavery, the mayan formed a substantial proportion of the total population. In Assam in the 1820's there seem to have been more slaves than masters - Neufville<sup>1</sup> puts the proportion as 50 to 1, but this must be to stretch the term "slave" to include political dependents outside the bounds of community altogether. In the slave releases of 1926-28 the official figures were<sup>2</sup>

Slaves released from the Nukawog	3,465
" " " " Triangle	5,367

The precise limits of the areas in question are not clear but comparison with Census data suggests that the proportion of slaves was here something between  $\frac{1}{4}$  and  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the total present population.

The proportion would of course depend upon where you drew the line as to the distinction between free man and slave. Stevenson<sup>3</sup> found that in some villages in the Chin Hills 85% of the population were taia of one sort or another, but not even the most prejudiced officer could ever have classed all these as slaves. Still we can conclude that mayan of various kinds represented a substantial and economically important section of the total Kachin society.

It is clear that the term "slaves" in the Official

1. Neufville, op.cit 343

2. League of Nations op.cit p.3.

3. Stevenson (v1) p.179

literature is made to cover a number of quite distinct social groups. Firstly where a Kachin chief has had under him dependant villages in which the bulk of the inhabitants were non-Kachin, such groups have often been classed as slaves, especially if racially they have been considered to belong to one of the more civilised peoples, e.g., Assamese, Burmese, Shan. The groups referred to in the Assam literature as Dooneah or Dooneeah are a case in point. Secondly there was the practice mentioned by George in which an individual against whom there was a feud or "debt" (hka) might be seized and held for ransom. Thirdly there were the true mayam, the low status commoners who were "owned" by the Chiefs. They were of very mixed origins and evidently included Assamese, Indians, Burmese, Shans, fellow Kachins and so on. Individually they were rated as chattels and might be transferred from one owner to another as part of an economic transaction; for example one of the items (hpaga) in the standard formula for a Chief's daughter's bride price is a mayam. But the state of being a slave does not seem to have been at all onerous, on the contrary in return for his services the slave received the protection of his master, a right of domicile and a right of cultivation. It seems fair in fact to consider the mayam merely as an inferior social caste only narrowly distinguished from freemen commoners in the class above them. This view is confirmed by the fact that the



compensation paid to slaves in settlement of legal disputes, though less, is only slightly less than that paid to a commoner freeman.<sup>1</sup> The slave however does not fit easily into the linked pattern of ritual and kinship which we have described. The slave, almost by definition, is far from his original home<sup>2</sup>; in the majority of cases he will know little or nothing of his original lineage status, which, in any case, would be unlikely to fit into the local pattern of his masters. After all, many slaves had not been born into the Kachin culture group at all; they had been born Assamese, Shan and so forth. I have no very solid evidence on the subject, but what I have suggests that the slave was adopted into the ritual of the lesser household nats of his master. Thus in the case of a chief, a slave though not permitted to make offerings to the uma nats might still be allowed to offer to other less important ancestors of his master.<sup>3</sup> On this account he was considered to some extent to belong to the lineage of his master, but to an inferior branch of it. Since it was primarily the chiefs and the village headmen who were the owners of slaves, this process of adoption served to re-emphasise the structure we have already described, namely that in each village the main core of householders are of the headman's lineage while the remainder are related to it by

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1. Kawlu Ma Hwang op.cit Chapter IX.

2. This is not the case with the Chin tafa, but, on the available evidence, seems to be a fair generalisation for the Kachin mayam.

3. e.g. Mangala Maraw Gam lately a mayam to Mangala †† Hwang gives to the household nats of Mangala Uri Hwang.

marriage. It should however now be understood that, if the mayam are taken into consideration, it will be found that in each village the central core of households may be divided into those of ma kam amyu, who are genuinely of the headmen's lineage, and others probably of mayam origin whose present status is somewhat confused and ambiguous. In the old days it was the mayam rather than the ma kam amyu members of the core lineage who actually resided with the chief in the chief's long house (htingmu); this is clearly brought out by the fact that wherever the mayam system has been abolished, the great houses of the chiefs are empty save for the single household of the chief himself. Comparative ethnographers who on the analogy of the Borneo Dyaks and the Burma Karens have insisted that the Kachin long house was intended to house an elaborate extended family have thus to some extent overreached themselves.<sup>1</sup>

From the point of view of the general theme of this book the great importance of the mayam system in the past was that it provided a mechanism whereby numerous members of alien cultures were constantly being imported into the "Kachin community". In the process the foreigners gradually became Kachins, but the general run of Kachins must also to some extent have become foreigners.

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1. See Chapter 2.



Land Tenure: Modes of acquiring title.

Earlier in this Chapter I described the processes of lineage fission which, in the case of a chief's lineage, might lead to the establishment of a new village and possibly the establishment of a new chieftainship. In this earlier discussion we viewed the matter from the point of fission, that is from the village from which a segment broke away. We need now to consider how this segment in fact established any rights in land elsewhere.

Under present conditions owing to the artificial stability imposed by Government it is impossible to study such matters at first hand, but Kawlu Ma Nawng's account<sup>1</sup> seems to ring true

"Land for the establishment of their village was usually purchased from the owners at the time by the ancestors of the present owners. These ancestors had to pay out articles of value to purchase the land so that if any question of the sale of land arises the matter concerns all the related groups whose ancestors joined their resources to purchase the land.....Of all the price paid for land the most important articles are a necklace of 100 beads known as the Shawang kaltawng (literally "the necklace of the parcel of land) and a steel dah, signifying the cutting off and handing over of this parcel of land. The possession of this dah removes for all time the possibility of the ownership of the land being disputed."

Land given to the head of a group of hired braves as a reward for victory is called ragan ka. It is a payment for the victory and no-one can ever dispute the ownership of land so acquired.....

1. Kawlu Ma Nawng op.cit. pp 57/58.
2. c.f. p.34 above the dah given by the Lafawn chief to his Naga dependents.



Land has usually been acquired in one of three ways:-

- (a) It has been obtained as a result of a victory in a fight.
- (b) It has been occupied by wandering tribes who thought it looked good for settlement.
- (c) It has been given as the price for the hire of braves.

Sometimes land is given by the brides parents to the bridegroom as one of the presents but such gifts are rare. It occurs in cases where the owners of the land have no sons and no near male relatives..... This gift of land is known as Kungdawn ga

If a site is required to establish a village a price must be paid to the owners of the land. This demand for land for a village site is known in Jinghpaw as Malihya ga (to require site). When the price has been paid the land owners hand back a dah and a spear saying "The land is now yours for any purpose you want it!" Land made over in this way may be used by those acquiring it for even purposes of violence. The purchasers may also put up the large main post in the front of their house which is usual amongst only chiefs and land owners; they may also make sacrifices to the great nat (Madai) of the chiefs. Even so they can only have a manau with the permission of the original owners and after they have given such original owners gifts.

- If the price as described above is not paid to the chiefs who were the original owners, then those desirous of entering land to establish a new village cannot commit any violent act on the land, they cannot make offerings to the Madai nat, they cannot dig out the large graves which are the prerogative of those of chief's blood, they cannot erect the large house-post and they cannot hold a manau - if they do any of these things then they must compensate the chiefs who own the land, so it is absolutely essential for the full price to be paid to the owning chiefs if rights over land are to be acquired and a new village established.

Close relatives of the ruling chiefs who assist in fighting can when living in the tract, exercise all such rights as the digging of large graves and the offering to the Madai Nat without any payment of gifts to the actual ruling chief.

This very illuminating passage needs perhaps some annotation to make it fully comprehensible. The expression "sale of land" and "price" suggest perhaps a cold blooded transaction in



hard cash, but what is actually involved is a long winded transfer of numerous carefully specified hpakas (items of ritual value), accompanied by much ritual and alcoholic refreshment; the number, though not perhaps the value of reciprocal hpakas given by the "sellers" to the "buyers" is probably at least equal to the number of hpakas given by the buyers to the sellers. According to the nature of the gift exchange made, the status of the incoming lineage vis-a-vis the original chief's lineage varies. If the head of the core lineage of the new group is of du bau stock it is possible for him to acquire the status of a minor chief, partially though not completely independent of the "original owners" (i.e., the mung duwa). On the other hand, in other circumstances, the headman of the new village may make no pretensions to independence either political or ritual, and will accept his status as being that of a subordinate salang wa to the existing chief, in token of which he will make contributions to the latter's ritual feasts. Kawlu Ma Nawng does not suggest that the founders of a new village are necessarily either agnatic or affinal relatives of the "original owners"; but such relationship is certainly the norm, if it does not exist before the establishment of a new village it is arranged very shortly afterwards. In many of the ritual procedures at the numshang shrine it is tacitly assumed that all present can be classed either as hnu-nau, mayu or dana

relation to the chief's lineage. Complete outsiders to the kinship network are simply not catered for.

The last sentence of the quotation is interesting as it covers precisely the Hpialang situation already described in which the two Maran lineage groups M'mwe and Gumje after originally sharing a common numshang now act in ritual independence. According to local "history", the Gumje were the allies of the M'mwe when the latter annexed the territory from the Atsi-Laphai.

What has been said here about the manner in which the members of a single lineage, seeking to establish a new village, obtain rights of domicile and tenure from the ruling group, applies similarly, on a smaller scale, to the manner in which an outsider can obtain rights of domicile from a village headman. If the founder of a new household is of the same lineage as the village headman he has automatically rights of tenure within the village, but if he is of another lineage he can obtain those rights only by means of a gift exchange with the headman and even then the "sale", as Kawlu Ma Nawng would call it, is not unconditional. The householder must still make contributions to the nat rituals of the headman and also (if it is gumga territory) contribute a thigh of every animal killed to the 'thigh eating chief.'

But at the same time the householder, whatever his lineage, has his own personal household nat connected with



his own ancestry in the same way as the uma nats of the chief are connected with theirs. Thus Carrapiett<sup>1</sup> describing the ceremonial connected with the first occupancy of a new house remarks

"The important Gungun Gumphai or house nat is not neglected for the wife has brought from her old house a bamboo containing liquor which she had placed on the Gungun Gumphai nat altar in the usual way prior to the move. This bamboo of liquor is transferred to the new house so that the connection with the house nat remains unbroken."

It will be noted that the procedure here is the same as that previously described for the transfer of a Chief's uma nats on the occasion of a major lineage split.

#### Land Tenure: Types of occupancy.

The tenancy thus created is of several kinds.

Firstly there is the house site itself. This is permanently held, and associated with it there is a small area used as a garden (gun) which is also the permanent private cultivation of the household concerned.

In most areas the main cultivation is a hill clearing of the shifting type known as taungya in the Burma literature

1. Carrapiett op cit p.21.

and ihum in the Assam literature.<sup>1</sup> The Kachin terms are yi for the plot of an individual household and vin wa for the large block of cleared hillside worked in any one year, corresponding to the Chin term lonil mentioned by Stevenson.<sup>2</sup>

The group of villages which share a common numshang normally also share a common vin wa. The reason for this is obvious if we consider the implications of the shadip nat ritual discussed earlier in this chapter. This is a point of some practical importance. In 1938/40 Government put great

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1. In this book I use taungya for the system as such, vin-wa for the total block of clearing under cultivation in any one year, yi for the individual plot or plots of a particular household. Thus a vin-wa comprises numerous yi.

The system of rotational hill clearing (taungya) generally practiced by the Kachins is, with small local variations, identical to that followed by nearly all the jungle dwelling hill people of the region including Karens, "Hill Shans", Palaung, Wa, Kishai, Abor, Naga, Kuki, Chin, Lushai etc. etc.. In the Assam literature the term used is always ihum; in Burma likewise the term is always taungya.

In Burmese a plot of wet rice cultivation is le

a plot of dry rice cultivation is ya

Hence dry rice cultivation on hill sides is taung ya (hill ya)

Taungya has now come to be a technical term for any system of shifting cultivation in which the grass, undergrowth, or jungle is first cut down and allowed to dry out, and then burnt off immediately before the beginning of the rains; the resultant ash then forms the fertilising seedbed of whatever is planted.

The Shan equivalent of Burmese ya is hai. The Kachin term hkaibang yi - "grassland yi" - is a derivation from this.

2. Stevenson (vi) p.31.



pressure on the scattered villages in the Sinlum area to amalgamate into tightly grouped village clusters.<sup>1</sup> There were various economic reasons why this proposal should meet with opposition but one effective obstacle was that the proposed amalgamations were ordered without regard to the lineage associations of the groups concerned. The result was that even those who were willing to obey the Government could not see their way through the maze of ritual complications which the arbitrary non-traditional type of amalgamation involved.

Frequently a yin wa clearing is cultivated only for one season and then allowed to revert to jungle. It can be seen therefore that if say ten years are to elapse between clearings of the same plot, the total "cultivable area" (including fallow) required by even a small village is very considerable. The economic implications of this are considered at some length in the next Chapter, and it suffices here to explain that each household in the village has a right to a cultivation site in each annual clearing. The limitations of this right have not yet been fully studied. In a survey I made at Kpalang in 1939 I found that rather more than half of the households cultivating yi said they were working the same plots as they had done some eight years previously when the same yin wa had last been

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3. For the official viewpoint see "Progress Report on the Kachin Regeneration Scheme in the Sinlunkaba Subdivision." (1937/39; 38/39; 39/40)

cleared; in the other plots there had been much reshuffling of tenancy. Moreover there was nothing beyond local repute to prove that the plot boundaries corresponded in any way with those held previously.

The clearing of individual vin wa necessarily follows approximately a regular cycle over a period of years - otherwise the jungle would never recover, - but the decision as to which area to clear in any particular dry weather is not automatic. The du salang ni (chief and elders) consult not only each other but the pats also....When the decision has been made and the clearing completed (by joint communal effort), the clearing is divided into household plots.

- In Hpalang the procedure seemed to be that any household had first claim on the plot it had cultivated last time, but there then remained a considerable residue of plots which (a) had formerly been cultivated by households now defunct, or (b) had formerly been cultivated by households which did not want to take up their option on that particular plot. It was up to the du salang ni to allocate this residual land among the residual households in the most amicable manner possible. This I think is the general pattern, and it is a mistake to suppose as has sometimes been done, that either the chief or the village headman is the absolute "owner" of the land with complete discretion as how plots are allocated among householders.



A point of importance has been noticed by Stevenson with respect to the very similar system among the Lahu Chin. He points out that, since individual households have land rights in lonil (yin wa) that are lying fallow as well as in the lonil that is in current cultivation, it is necessary to prevent individual households from exercising their own discretion as to which plots lie fallow and which do not. "The belief in the "Spirits of the Fields" restricts cultivation to such fields as have been formally opened by propitiation of the guardian spirits."<sup>1</sup> If for Stevenson's "Spirits of the Fields" and "guardian spirits" one substitutes the ideology of the ga nat ritual described in this chapter, the parallel holds good for the Kachin.

It must be noted however that the generalisation, that the boundaries of individual yin wa clearings remain the same from one cycle of cultivation to another, must not be pressed too far. The size of the annual clearing must always be adjusted to the size of the community, which may change substantially from one cycle to another. Furthermore in certain areas the jungle has given way to grass, and here a change in the agricultural technique involves a difference in the details of tenancy rights. In grassland clearings (hkalbang yi) the crop rotation tends to run on some such

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1. Stevenson op cit. p.88.

cycle as:- First year beans, second and third years rice, next ten years grass, then again beans. In such a scheme, only one third of the total cleared area would be abandoned in any one year, and a similar amount of new clearing would be put under beans. How the principle of the perpetuation of individual household holdings is achieved in such a system I do not know. Nor do I know how far the conventional ritual of sa nat ceremonial and communally cultivated chief's yi is modified, or abandoned, under these conditions. That the differences are substantial I can assert from my own experience of Hpelang where the hkaibang yi was as important, if not more important than the conventional jungle clearing yi. All that can be said is that whatever the yi system, the chiefs and elders have a definite obligation to allocate cultivable land to every household that requires it in any given year. In general, such rights of allocation, or reallocation, exist side by side with limited rights of permanent ownership in individual plots by particular households.

There is however a further type of holding which differs fundamentally from those so far described. Wet Paddy cultivation in irrigated terraces exists as either a main or subsidiary agricultural technique in most parts of the Kachin Hills. The cost of construction of such terraces represents a substantial capital investment. Whatever value the land may have had when first allocated by the chief, its value as



wet paddy land is due to the improvements put in by the tenant. Moreover whereas tsungya land may lie fallow for anything up to 19 years in every 20, wet paddy terraces can be cultivated at least 17 years in every 20. In practice therefore the wet paddy land comes to be virtually the private property of the household which works it. Outright cash sale may be theoretically avoided, but tenancy rights may be mortgaged in a variety of ways some of which are almost indistinguishable from outright sale. In this, Kachin practice differs in no way from what was the general practice throughout North Burma prior to the complications introduced by land settlement and land registration.<sup>1</sup> Current practice in this connection however is greatly obscured by the official policy of segregating the hill peoples from the plains. Kachins are in most instances strongly discouraged from acquiring ownership rights in plains paddy land, and vice versa, plains people (e.g. Shans and Burmans) are virtually prohibited from acquiring land in the hills. The belief has thus grown up among some government officers that private ownership of land is quite an alien concept to the "traditional" Kachin. Robertson<sup>2</sup> for example generalising on all forms of Kachin tenure, including that of wet paddy cultivation, asserts positively "it is clearly seen that land is communal property and cannot be bought or sold."

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1. Scott (i) 268.

2. Robertson (1) Section VI.

All turns of course upon the meaning of the word to "buy". As Scott pointed out, in the traditional Burmese system, what we would call a sale, was technically speaking a mortgage. "No interest is charged on the money loaned; the mortgager, or any descendant to the tenth generation, may redeem at anytime he can. In no case does foreclosing, the fixing of a time beyond which the mortgager cannot redeem, seem to have been recognised."<sup>1</sup> This is precisely the type of transfer that is traditionally recognised among the Kachins, but it must be noted it applies only to permanent wet paddy cultivation and that the transfer is subject to the approval of the village council or chief. Moreover the theory that the transfer is a mortgage and not a sale is not entirely theoretical. J.L. Leyden told me that he once adjudicated in a case in which a Lashi was claiming to redeem a parcel of irrigated terracing said to have been mortgaged away some eight generations back; to his astonishment the local elders supported the claim and the land was duly redeemed.

In my experience there is no communal labour or communal ritual associated with wet paddy cultivation. Whereas in taungya cultivation most of the heavy labour is done by joint working parties of a dozen or so households working together

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1. Scott (11) 268.



on a reciprocal basis, in which the only direct wages paid are the food and beer for the day - supplied by the household whose field is being worked - in wet paddy cultivation hired labour is paid a regular wage either in cash or in kind. All fertility rituals in the wet paddy areas are individually by households and in my experience do not follow a standard pattern. This is what was to be expected in view of the lesser importance of the chief's overriding rights in such a land, and the fact that the cultivation cycle in such land does not concern the community as a whole but is at the discretion of the individual "owners".

The <sup>A</sup>galo (democratic) system as a symptom of variation.

Throughout this account the stress has been on variation. Within the category labelled "Kachin Culture" there appears to be no standardised mode of behaviour in any field of activity. This is in accordance with the premises of my theoretical approach. But what we seem to be arriving at are certain "principles of organisation" which are capable of a wide variation of practical expression under different conditions.

Considered politically, a Kachin political unit, if it varies in the direction of larger overall dimensions, tends to become indistinguishable from a Shan State. I have

in fact mentioned already instances where Kachin political units in the past actually formed segments of quite definite Shan States. It is hardly going too far to say that all Kachin chiefs aspire to being Shan Sawbwas. The Kachin title Zau, to which only chiefs and chiefs' sons are entitled, is the Shan Sao which is similarly limited, and the personal names of Kachin Chiefs - Zau Kum Hseng is an example - are almost exact imitations of Shan originals. (1)

On the other hand if the variation swings in the opposite direction towards smaller overall dimensions, the hierarchical structure becomes less pronounced, the predominance of the chief over his fellows decreases, and we arrive at the system which the literature labels "democratic" or "republican", known to the Kachins as gunlao.

The position at any given moment is essentially unstable. Within the total Kachin area there are always some groupings which are tending in the direction of becoming Shan; others at present organised under chiefs may be on the point of breaking up to form "democracies"; others again now rated as "democracies" may be once more developing symptoms of chieftainship.

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1. Kachins themselves recognise that individuals, especially chiefs, may "become" Shan. The expression is sam tai sai. Analogous is sam htang hta ge ai - "to adopt a Shan custom. The verb hta - "to collect", "pick up", is that already mentioned above in connection with the levirate.



I emphasise here the variation in political scale but every such variation corresponds too to variations in the degree of economic opportunity, in technological resources, in ritual organisation. Some of these possibilities of variation have already been mentioned in this chapter and I shall deal with others in the next.

Meanwhile however to round off this chapter I feel I need to establish once and for all that the distinction that has been drawn between "democratic" and "autocratic" organisations in this region is a contrast of emphasis not a contrast in kind.

(1)

The following was George's view of the status and authority of a typical Kachin chief:-

"If he (the chief) has a ready tongue and wit his counsels are attended to, otherwise he is a mere nonentity and fades into insignificance behind his Fawmalings (also called Salangs) or councillors ... They receive no remuneration but their orders are obeyed with respect, punishment for disobedience being of course ejection from the community, as the councillors naturally carry the majority of inhabitants with them. Theoretically the Sawbwa is master of all the land in his territory, but practically individual rights are respected; of course, outsiders before selling or working land have to get the Sawbwa's permission. All that the Sawbwa gets as fixed revenue is a yearly due of one or two baskets of rice per house, but he is also entitled to a part, usually a leg, of all game and of all bullocks and buffaloes killed within the limits of his jurisdiction; while such Sawbwes as have their territory along the caravan routes receive also such collections as are made from travellers for free passage. Otherwise the Sawbwa is in the same position as any other villager, and has to work for his living in the same manner, with this one exception that four times



a year, at jungle clearing, sowing, weeding and harvest time, the whole village has to give one day's free labour to the Sawbwa in helping him to cultivate his plot of land, he feeding them on that day. Curiously enough he is not usually judge of village disputes, nor does he interfere to keep the peace. The disputants are said usually to refer to the arbitration of the Salangs, sometimes of their own, but more often of a separate village, and should an award not be accepted the law of reprisal is resorted to, the Sawbwa, unless he or his relations are personally concerned, having no call to interfere. Intertribal or intercommunity quarrels are always settled by reprisals, when of course, the Sawbwes take the lead in executing vengeance."

George's legal analysis was here very superficial but it records the impressions of a man who was familiar with Kachin chiefs before their position had been modified by British administrative regulations.

The difference between the status of such a chief and the status of the senior headman of a gumlae - democratic - community is negligible. In the Kachin view the latter cannot possibly be a "chief" (duwa) because he does not receive the ritual thigh and does not carry out the madai net ceremonial. At the time of the annexation this Kachin view was taken at its face value and it was therefore duly recorded that the gumlae have no chiefs - in the sense of no individual leader. The Burmese however had not been so easily deceived.

According to Kawlu Ma Nawng

At the time of the settlement of the Gumses and Gumlaes in the (Hukawng) Valley the Kings of Burma were still ruling and they authorized certain divisions of the territory into tracts and gave each tract head authority over it. Four Gumlae tracts were constituted...



and eight gumba tracts .... (The Burmese issued appointment orders - "ban") ... The people are Gumbas so their "ban" is called a "Gumbau ban", which is strange, as this "ban" amounts to a chief's appointment order - and the Gumbau element does not acknowledge the right of, or even the existence of, chiefs."

In short it appears that "absence of chiefs" among the gumbau is little more than a talking point, much as the word "democracy" is currently used in certain somewhat autocratic societies in Eastern Europe. ~~(H)~~ As I have suggested earlier, the most likely interpretation seems to be that all gumbau movements do start as a "rebellion", in which the hierarchical political structure of a mung is broken down into independent segments. The tradition is then established that each village segment is thereafter completely independent. This however is only a phase; in the course of time integrative social forces tend to build up once more the pyramid of political authority. In political practice, though possibly not in ritual theory, this reintegration seems to have already taken place in the gumbau tracts in the Triangle and the Mungawng; but in other gumbau areas an apparent lack of individual leadership at any level above that of village headmen persists. Yet nowhere is it possible to assert that any particular state or scale of political organisation is stable and fixed.

The Duleng area to which I have already referred

is an example. Today it appears to be "completely gunlao".

There is a local tradition that formerly there were great chiefs of the "Duleng clan." Although there is an overt appearance of village independence it is noticeable that for ritual purposes the villages appear to fall into clusters, some worship Kindu nat, Duleng mung nat, others have a mung nat called Sarap, and others still a nat called Param. Finally we have the fact that when Errol Gray visited Hkamti Long in 1893 he was frustrated from proceeding further east by the objections of a "powerful Kachin Chief" named Alang Chow Tong (Alang Zau Tang?)<sup>(1)</sup>. The village of Alang Ga<sup>(2)</sup> does lie right across Errol Gray's intended path. But this and all neighbouring villages are today gunlao! The inference of very considerable local instability is unavoidable.

I cannot assert positively that this flexibility between "democratic" organisation and "autocratic" organisation which appears among the Kachin holds good also for neighbouring groups such as Chins and Nagas, I do not even know myself how well it holds good for the Maru whose symbiotic relationship with the Jinghpaw Kachin is in most respects complete, but I do find, on looking through the literature, that there

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1. Gray (ii), 225.

2. Shown on some maps as Alang dun hkn.



is a very strong suggestion of much greater flexibility than has usually been postulated in the past.

That variation exists is of course fully recognised.

(1)

Hutton for example says of the Nagas

"Every sort of political organisation is found from the autocracy of tabued chiefs (Konyak tribes) through gerontocracy (Ao tribe) to purest democracy (Angami tribe)"

But what has not so far been admitted is flexibility. It is assumed that because some Konyaks are autocratic therefore all Konyaks are autocratic, have always been autocratic, and always will be autocratic. My argument is that the observed variations are manifestation of a single principle of organisation. We cannot understand that principle unless a diachronic flexibility is admitted. Once such a flexibility is recognised it is easier to appreciate relationships between particular forms of political organisation and economic pressures. It is from this viewpoint that I approach the problem in the next chapter.

#### The Zachin concept of "local community" (bu)

My argument that the autocratic (gunsa) and democratic (gunlao) systems are merely scale variations of the same theme is supported by the colloquial use of the term bu, which has no exact equivalent in English.

I have shown how, in the gunsa system, the members of a village cluster share a common numshang and a common hill clearing (yin wa), and that they are linked together by ties of kinship. But I have also shown that they are very far from being all members of one clan or lineage; on the contrary, the tendency is for the village cluster to become endogamous. The group solidarity based on common domicile and common economic interest is expressed in the term bu. Anhte Hpalang bu ni re - means "we are people of Hpalang", regardless of lineage affiliation, and regardless of which individual village is involved. Thus the people of Gumjye kahtawng would never in this instance refer to themselves as Gumjye bu ni but always as Hpalang bu ni. In contrast in gumlao territory, the bu unit is usually a single village. Where this is so, fact accords with Kachin theory; the villages are independent. But even in gumlao areas the bu sometimes covers a group of neighbouring villages, it is then certain that the process of political aggregation has at least begun.

#### Concluding note on cultural boundaries

In this chapter we have examined certain important structural principles that underlie Kachin organisation in whatever guise it appears. The point to which I would particularly draw attention is the readiness with which



these principles extend beyond conventional cultural frontiers. Wherever you may draw the line between Kachin and non-Kachin you will find kinship links stretching across the frontier. Politically we have noted Nagas who are part of Kachin States, and Kachins who are part of Shan States. We have seen too that the traditional institution of bond-slavery persistently introduced "outsiders" into Kachin culture. We have seen that the ritual system adheres closely to a well defined regional pattern, common to other societies beside the Kachin. Land tenure is linked with the practice of other hill peoples in some of its aspects and with Burmese practice in others, and so on. More than ever it becomes clear that if we are to have a proper understanding of the interrelationships and interactions involved then we must consider the entire region as a whole, - a cultural continuum with constantly modifying variations, rather than as a series of discrete cultural boxes each precisely separated from its neighbour.

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## Chapter IV

### The Economic Interdependence of Hills and Plains.

#### Structural similarities in different parts of the Burma- Assam Area.

The content of the present Chapter stands somewhat apart from that of the rest of the book but it is nevertheless vital to my general argument.

It is no part of my theme that the form of any particular society is uniquely determined by its social and physical environment; what I do insist is that the mutual relations of neighbouring groups are critically influenced by economic factors and cannot be understood except in the light of an analysis of those factors. This statement in no way precludes the likelihood of there being many alternative lines of development in any particular economic situation.

The most fundamental of all economic factors are those which bear directly upon the food supply; it can be deemed a pre-requisite of any satisfactory political arrangement that the individual members of the society concerned do not starve.

Owing to the enormous de facto predominance of rice in the economy of the Burmese, Shans and Kachins I hold that it is legitimate, for this particular area, to interpret the economic "food sufficiency factor" as a "rice sufficiency



factor" Granted this simplification it is relevant to my general argument to consider whether, and under what conditions the observed technique of agriculture can reasonably be expected to produce a sufficiency of food for the local inhabitants. If there are conditions in which such a food sufficiency cannot be expected then, in such circumstances, the basic requirement of a closed economy is ruled out from the start.

On this basis I argue that none of the groups to which discrete "cultural" or "tribal" labels have been conventionally applied in the Burma-Assam area can possibly form closed economies. Extra-cultural economic relations between one hill group and another, and more especially between hill groups and plains groups, are a major and fundamental feature of the total social situation; these economic relations I suggest are reflected in a persisting cultural interchange between neighbouring groups - however such groups be defined - and this results in an endemic political instability.

I have already indicated that in the essentials of social structure the various hill communities of Burma and Assam are all very similar, and that one of the principle features of overt variation is the degree of local aggregation. Some groups "generally speaking" live in small settlements of 10 houses or so, others "generally speaking" live in large densely aggregated settlements of

several hundred houses. These differences are not absolute; one cannot say that all Kachins live in small settlements; all Nagas in large ones. The difference is one of modal type.

This feature of local aggregation has, among other things, a fairly direct correlation with defensive military strength. The large densely aggregated settlement is defensively stronger than the small loosely aggregated settlement. There is therefore a tentative presumption that, relatively speaking, large densely aggregated settlements represent comparatively self sufficient communities which in the past have achieved a fairly high degree of cultural separation from their neighbours through being habitually on the defensive. On the other hand small loosely aggregated settlements may represent communities which are more systematically integrated into the political structure of their neighbours, so that lines of opposition are neither habitual nor clear cut. This possible contrast in the degree of self sufficiency in different localities should be borne in mind in considering the implications of the statistics on village size quoted later in this Chapter.

I do not propose to develop in detail the theme that the structural characteristics found to be modal for the Kachin Hills Area occur also (with different emphasis) in neighbouring areas, but it is worth pointing out some of



the themes which appear to me to be general.

(1) I suspect that all the Hill Societies of the Burma-Assam region without exception may be analysed into the homologous segments having both a territorial (settlement) and kinship significance.

(ii) In every part of this region the political aggregates show a flexibility between the two extremes of autocratic and democratic organisation comparable to the Gumaa-Gumlae contrast among the Kachins.

(iii) While rights in land are generally vested in the lineage rather than in the individual, "communal ownership" and "ownership of land by chiefs" are alike fictions. The members of a household jointly invariably have numerous rights in the land of the village of which they are a part and these rights are distinct from rights of the community as a whole. Furthermore where a system of shifting rotational agriculture prevails the rights of alienation are always restricted; but as the period of fallow is reduced through the more intensive use of land and capital, rights of alienation become more marked. Systems of mortgage approximating closely to outright sale by individuals prevail<sup>1</sup> wherever land is under permanent or near permanent cultivation.

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1. c.f. Stevenson (vi), 91/3; Farry (1), 251; Robertson (1), 10; Sieden (1) para 208.

(iv) In the segmentary territorial structure there is a general tendency for small units to grow into larger ones. Small segments are therefore "new" or "young"; large ~~unsegmented~~ aggregates are "old". In the new small segment the core lineage predominates numerically and the group tends to be exogamous, in large old segments the accretions to the core lineage outnumber the households of the core lineage itself and a marked tendency to "segment endogamy" results. Stevenson has described the situation among the Central Chins in the following terms:-

The picture of family groupings within the village is thus thrown into perspective as a conflict of forces, - traditional laws of mutual exchange between relatives encouraging the formation of endogamous groups of patrilineally related extended families interconnected by marriage, and migratory tendencies continually threatening to break these up. The result observable is that the big old villages tend to be endogamous, while the new small villages .... show a large proportion of persons whose marriages were contracted outside the village of residence.

This factor of differential local endogamy turns on the factor of social convenience. A young man is likely to marry a girl of the local community in preference to a stranger whenever the local girls are not barred to him by rules of lineage exogamy. Stevenson in the village cluster of Kleuhmun (Chin Hills) found 81% of marriages within the village cluster; my comparable figures for Hpalang were rather lower than this but even higher if "the local community" be taken as an area within four miles of the centre of Hpalang.



One could go on citing parallels of structure between the different "tribes" indefinitely, but that does not mean to say that there are not important local exceptions which fall outside the general pattern. Thus for example the asymmetrical marriage rule that finds expression among the Kachins in the division of an individual's relatives into three groups mayu (brother's brother's group), dama (Father's sister's husband's group), and hpu-nau (clan brothers) is paralleled among some of the other hill peoples - e.g., the Thadou Kukis - but not all.<sup>1</sup> Where this distinction does not occur among their neighbours the Kachins recognise the existence of an important structural difference; they say "the mayu and dama are the same" (mayu dama maronsha re), but this does not preclude intermarriage across the cultural frontier thus indicated. As a matter of fact it would appear that even some of the Maru groups who in most respects are culturally very close to the Jinghpaw do not make the clear out distinction among their affinal relatives between mayu and dama; this in turn may possibly be correlated with a closer aggregation of settlement than is common among the Jinghpaw.

Again, as I have already mentioned, the various systems of age set grading, combined with stereotyped feast giving,

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1. Cf. Shaw (1) Appx; Leach (1).

and graduated political dignities which are found among a number of Chin, Naga, Meithei, and Shan groups, seem to have no very close parallel among the Kachins. There would be no difficulty in enumerating other basic contrasts which appear to set the Kachins apart from their neighbours, but in this book I am interested in similarities.

In the present chapter it is especially the factor of density and scale of local aggregation in relation to agricultural technique that particularly interests me. In 1884 four Angami Naga "villages" listed by Mackenzie<sup>1</sup> contained respectively 865, 545, 530 and 434 houses, such villages being always densely packed aggregates of buildings with the minimum of intervening street and garden space. In contrast published Census figures for the Myitkyina Kachin Hill Tracts in 1921<sup>2</sup> show that 90% of the population lived in villages of less than 20 houses each and over 42% in houses of less than 10 houses each. If as I claim there are similarities of social structure between the peoples of these localities then this extreme variation of settlement habit calls for examination and comment.

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1. Mackenzie, (1), 84.

2. Burma (x)(b) Vol B.

"Myitkyina Kachin Hill Tracts" consists mainly of an area north of Myittha and west of the Mali Hka.

MYITKYIANA



### Census Villages and Census Tracts.

To understand the extent to which differences of residential concentration form a continuously graded variation it would be an advantage if I could first state succinctly just what are the facts. Unfortunately from the published data this is not possible.

At first sight the official Census tables appear to give us what we require, but this is deceptive. In all areas "Number of Village Tracts" is tabulated against "Number of Occupied Houses" and "Number of persons", and this would seem to give directly the ratio "number of persons per village" which would show the scale of the residential aggregate. Unfortunately however the "Village Tract" is an administrative rather than a residential unit

"In regularly administered parts of Burma the unit of census organisation outside towns was the village tract which is the jurisdiction of a village headman....The village tract is an administrative unit and may contain only part of a residential village, several such villages or no true village at all but only a number of clusters of houses scattered through the tract....In the Shan States Karenni, the Chin Hills district and the Arakan Hill Tracts and the hill tracts of other districts except Myitkyina and Katha, the figures... usually represent residential villages, while the hill tracts of Myitkyina and Katha districts they represent buvas charges" 1.

Even so it would be possible to make some limited statistical use of the available figures if one knew just what value to attach to the word usually. Unfortunately

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1. Bannison (1), 55.

a check over an area I know well, - namely the Sinlum Kachin Hill Tracts -, shows that the decision as to what is a village is quite arbitrary. In 1921 the settlements along the Hpalang ridge were treated as 8 villages, namely Maran, Kumje, Laga, Sunlut, Cauri, Mahpaw, Yawyung (Maru), Yawyung (Chinese). This is a reasonable division and represents "villages" in the sense of my terminology. The <sup>2</sup>size of these villages (in numbers of houses) was then: 25, 26, 27, 18, 29, 5, 6, 16, making a total aggregate of 152 houses, which in my terminology would form the "village cluster" of Hpalang. The same Census (1921) treats Kaihtik (148 houses) as a single village, and Laika (140 houses) also as single village. But in the 1911 Census Kaihtik was rated as 7 villages and Laika as 6 villages.<sup>1</sup> In these circumstances a statistical average designed to show the average size of the residential aggregate is impossible. Again for the most characteristic Kachin areas, namely the Mkahku (Triangle) and the Hukawng, no Official Census figures exist at all<sup>2</sup>.

In the theory that follows therefore I present my argument as a deduction from first principles. In framing this argument I have endeavoured to take into consideration the available statistical data; at the same time I must stress that these statistics leave much to be desired and in their present form are capable of interpretation in a variety of ways.

1. Burma (x), (a) Vol. B.

2. See Chapter 2.



### The Basic relation of a population to its food supply.

The relationship of any population to its food supply is critical. By that I mean that a population which cannot obtain sufficient food to meet its essential nutritional requirements is in an intolerable situation which must result in change of some sort. There are various possible types of change which may "resolve" any such a situation. But before considering such possibilities but it is necessary first that we have a clear realisation of what criteria determine a food deficiency situation of this critical type.

The population that can be supported in a particular area clearly depends upon a large number of factors among which are the proportion of land under cultivation, the crop yield, the productivity of labour, the marketability of alternative uses of labour and so on. Provided the conditions are somewhat simplified it is possible to reduce these phrases to concrete terms.

### Basic Crops in the Hill Area.

Over most of the Burma-Assam area rice is the basic and preferred food crop. The only exceptions to this within the Kachin Hills Area are high altitude localities in parts of the Htaungaw and Nam Tanai areas where for climatic reasons



maize and buckwheat replace rice as the main crop<sup>1</sup>; Lisu (Yawin), who seem to have a general preference for altitudes in excess of 6000 feet also usually have maize as their basic crop in all parts of the Hills.

Outside the Kachin Hills Area there are several localities where, for climatic reasons, rice cannot be grown and a variety of alternative cereals are grown instead, notably Job's Tears, Italian Millet, Sorghum and Maize.<sup>2</sup> That this type of cultivation is adopted perforce and not through preference is indicated by the fact that at lower altitudes, where rice can be grown, these same groups change over to rice cultivation. The only exception to this rule seems to be the taro cultivation of the Konyak Nagas. Purer Haimendorf<sup>N</sup> comments as follows concerning these Norther<sup>N</sup> Nagas.

"Common to all norther<sup>N</sup> and eastern tribes is the shifting cultivation, a method of agriculture in which the jungle is felled and burnt and the crop sown on ground only slightly dug over. While the staple crop of the Aes and Semas is rice, the Konyaks plant a good deal of taro and the Changs, Kinsangs, and Kalyo-Kongyus live mainly on Job's Tears. It has already been mentioned that the cultivation of taro must be a cultural preference of the Konyaks for their country is very suitable for rice, the prevalence of Job's Tears among the latter tribes however is due to climatic reasons; the ranges on which they live are so high that rice does not grow well."

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1. Burma (111), 14 says Buckwheat level is 7000 ft and over; Copeland (1) reports Himalayan <sup>RICE</sup> up to 8000 ft. I have seen a very <sup>POOR</sup> crop at about 5,500 ft in the Nam Tanai area.
2. Burma, (111) 14; Weherts, (1) 64.
3. Purer Haimendorf (11), 215.



and again.

"In a part of the world where all people regardless of race and civilisation live mainly on rice it is surprising to find a tribe cultivating taro a crop as rare in India as it is common in the South Seas."<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately I can find no adequate description of taro cultivation among the Konyaks. Its massive cultivation would on the face of it call for a very different organisation of the agricultural year from that adapted to cereal cultivation and a comparative study on these lines would be valuable. Furer Heimendorf is mistaken in thinking that taro is a rare plant in this part of the world. It is grown as a minor crop at least by the Kachins,<sup>2</sup> Sena Nagas,<sup>3</sup> Thado Kukis<sup>4</sup> and Khasis<sup>5</sup> and no doubt others. How far it is really the staple crop of the Konyaks is also not at all clear. Furer Heimendorf himself is ambiguous.

"While rice is the staple crop of most of the Naga Tribes it is not so in all Konyak villages. There it is not so in all Konyak villages. There taro is as important a part of the diet as that of rice and some Konyak villages have no rice but live exclusively on taro and a small amount of millet." <sup>6</sup>

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1. Ibid. 203
  2. Jingspaw nori includes taro and all yams.
  3. Hutton, (11), 60/61.
  4. Shaw, (1) 87 Footnote by Hutton.
  5. Burdon, (11), 45.
  6. Furer Heimendorf, (11) 205.

Hutton<sup>1</sup> claims that taro is the staple in part of the Konyak country but I have not traced any first hand description. Kauffman<sup>2</sup> who says that taro is the Konyak staple cites Hutton as his authority, but at the reference quoted<sup>3</sup> Hutton is writing of Anfang a village on the border of the Cheng and Konyak country where he found no rice but excellent fields of Italian millet, Sorghum and Job's Tears.

Among the Zahan Chins described by Stevenson<sup>4</sup> a combination of millet, maize and bean crops form the normal staples but this is by no means standard for all Chins.

#### THE ZAHAN

Even in Zahan Area rice predominates in low lying areas and significantly supports a higher density of population than the millet and maize of the uplands.<sup>5</sup> Rice is the

1. Hutton in Smith (1) Introduction xiii.

2. Kauffman (1), 21.

3. Hutton, (vi) 28.

4. Stevenson, (vi), 35.

5. From the fact of extra density Stevenson concludes that the people of the rice lands are worse off.

"The relatively heavy population and the consequent over-cultivation, the constant jungle burning and its attendant erosion, and the prevalence of private peasant ownership and high rental all contribute towards reducing the work-produce ratio to so low a point that in many places coolie work must be done to augment the results of agricultural effort (op.cit. p.114. footnote)

Since Stevenson has himself stressed, p.16, the encouragement towards migration inherent in Chin custom it is difficult to believe that there would be a relatively heavy population in the rice growing Manipur Valley if conditions there were as disadvantageous as he suggests. The facts is I suggest that the advantages of a rice diet outweigh the other disadvantages.



standard throughout the Lushai Hills.

For the Eastern and South-eastern fringe of the Kachin Area the Ethnographic data is very weak. Scott reports that the WILD Wa live on Buckwheat, Beans and Maize but apparently cultivate wet paddy in valleys at the foot of their hills. Their main production is opium which is traded for salt and rice. All available rice is allegedly converted into beer and spirits.<sup>1</sup>

Given suitable conditions wet rice is probably the most advantageous cereal that it is possible to grow. At its best it produces a higher yield per acre and per bushel of seed than any other cereal with the possible exception of certain coarse millets. It also appears to be less exhausting to the soil.<sup>2</sup>

The advantages of dry rice grown in a hill environment are however limited by many factors.

1. Scott (iv) p.219.

2. Chemical requirements in Kilograms per Hectare for a "normal" crop.

	Nitrogen	Phosphoric Acid	Lime	Potash
Wheat	138	74	62	190
Oats	126	78	38	129
Maize	65	29	28	82
Millet	65	56	31	112
Rice	97	26	27	62

Figures quoted by Copeland (p.23) after a Spanish source (Garola)

(i) Rainfall Rice needs a heavier overall rainfall during its growth period than the millets and beans, but it also requires a richer soil. In the kaungya system of hill clearing cultivation the quality of the soil depends largely on the density and lushness of the jungle growth during the fallow period; this in turn is dependent upon rainfall and temperature.

(ii) Altitude In the Burma Hills generally the forest line is at about 3,000 feet,<sup>1</sup> and above this level the quality of the jungle growth gradually changes from lush evergreen tropical forest to oak woods and pines. This lighter "temperate" forest produces an inferior kaungya seed bed and has less recuperative power under fallow. In practice, assuming a suitable rainfall, 5,500 ft is about the limit altitude for satisfactory dry hill paddy. The best crops seem to be grown below 4000 feet.

(iii) Incline. Rice needs a "good start". It must be sown in a damp, nitrogen rich, friable top soil. If heavy rain ensues before the seed has developed a rooting system to bind the broken top soil together the whole of the seed bed will be washed down the hill side. This is a very frequent occurrence. Naturally the steeper the incline the more frequent the disaster. The practical limit for rice cultivation seems to be a slope of about 35 degrees.

1. Stamp (iii)



(iv) Intercropping. While it is normal practice throughout the hills to plant everything at once, - (a laungya field towards harvest time is a picturesque confusion of rice and millet climbing beans, cucumbers, mustard and what have you) - , double cropping with rice as the first crop is not usually practical. If for instance rice and beans are sown simultaneously on the same ground and conditions are sufficiently warm and wet for satisfactory rice<sup>c</sup> production then the beans will grow so fast that they will swamp the rice.<sup>1</sup>

Bearing these factors in mind the characteristics of certain other crops may be considered.

Maize. Maize will grow at higher altitudes than rice, it will also grow on steeper inclines, - this last presumably because it will tolerate an inferior soil as its seed bed. The cultivation of maize by a group whose staple is rice does not therefore in general take up space which might otherwise be devoted to rice. An important characteristic is its rapid maturity. Maize is ripe a full six weeks before the earliest rice<sup>2</sup> and thus in all areas where the margin of food resources is low it serves a most valuable role in helping to tide over the lean months. Maize too has other advantages. Owing to its strong growth, it needs less weeding than rice, and, most important, the harvesting of maize does not overlap with the harvesting of rice.

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1. Stevenson (vi), 35

2. It is usually planted earlier than the rice.



Millets This term covers a wide variety of plants, and numerous varieties are grown in different parts of the hills. In the Chin Hills, where millet rates as a main crop, the principle varieties appear to have a habit somewhat similar to maize but are harvested even earlier. Elsewhere where the millets are of minor importance they are usually cropped along with the rice. In all areas millets are used principally for beer making rather than for direct consumption in cereal form.<sup>1</sup> Most of the millets will tolerate a very much drier climate than rice, - sorghum for example is a main crop in the Burma dry zone - and are hardy also to relatively cold climates.

Beans and Peas. In the Central Chin Hills where millet and maize are grown as main crops, - that is in the higher localities -, beans are intercropped, that is to say they are planted at the same time as the cereals and develop a crop after the harvesting of the cereal. As is the case with all leguminosae, beans and peas of all varieties are nitrogen fixing,<sup>2</sup> so that this intercropping preserves the fertility of the soil and makes possible the comparatively long periods of continuous cultivation which are characteristic of this particular hill area.<sup>3</sup> Although for the reasons already

1. In the case of the Wa the reverse is reported. Scott (iv) 219

2. Russell, (1) 22.

3. Stevenson (vi) 32 states that in some Chin areas land may be cultivated for 9 years in succession, and 3 years appears to be a minimum. In contrast the Kachin system, (rice cultivation with no crop rotation) works best where land is used for one year only. In practice fields used for two years in succession



stated intercropping of beans with rice is not usually practical, the fertilising value of a preliminary bean crop is everywhere recognised. In areas where the jungle has given way to grassland and there is therefore inadequate leaf mould to provide a satisfactory ash bed after the burning of the taungya, it is a common practice to devote the first season of cultivation, after a period of fallow, to a straight crop of beans and to follow this up with rice.<sup>1</sup> Beans are usually deemed an inferior crop to any of the cereals and where ample land is available for rice cultivation little labour effort is expended on the cultivation of beans.

Pumpkins, Cucumbers, Green Vegetables etc. It is of some importance to note that in the hills the cultivation of "green crops" does not represent any substantial part of the total labour-year. Most of the "vegetables" consumed in the hills are wild herbs leaves and roots, those that are cultivated are attended to more or less incidentally along with other crops of greater economic importance.<sup>2</sup> Likewise in the plains

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(Note 3 Continued from previous page) (npun yl) are common. But rice for three years in succession on the same land (bunhka) definitely destroys the recuperative power of the jungle.

1. I have observed this practice in areas as far apart as Hpalam in the Sinlum Hills and Kawngangpu in the Nam Tamai.
2. The following is a fair sample of subsidiary crops in a Kachin taungya:—millet, sesamum, beans, string beans, brinjal, chillies, maize, gingan (kind of gourd) water melon, cucumber, pumpkin, ginger, onions, yams, tomatoes, mustard. Similar crops are also grown in the sun-garden which is a small piece of permanent cultivation adjoining the house site, formerly mainly devoted to opium cultivation.



the cultivation of vegetables cannot in general be regarded as an alternative utilisation of labour to the cultivation of cereals. In the plains vegetables are usually grown on kaing land, that is on the fertile alluvial mud banks that are left in the neighbourhood of the rivers as the floods subside in the autumn. The kaing season is therefore October to May, while the maincrop rice season is May to December. Mayin, or hot weather paddy, which represents about 1% of all plains rice is grown on the best of the kaing land, but most kaing is not suitable for this purpose.<sup>1</sup>

(v) Techniques and Labour in Rice Production.

Finally it is necessary that we understand something of the techniques and labour requirements of rice cultivation.

In most cases, not only is rice the main crop, but it so outdistances all the other crops put together that, from the labour-resources point of view, it is really the only food crop that needs to be taken into consideration at all.

Notes on Agriculture in Burma published by the Government of Burma in 1943 listed acreages of 13 principle crops<sup>2</sup> by districts for a normal year. Figures for the three plains districts that abut on to the Kachin Hills are as follows.

	Paddy Acreage.	Total acreage of 12 other listed crops
Myitkyina District	100,000	1,300
Bhamo	31,000	100
Upper Chinthe	103,000	2,600

1. Burma(111), 3, 10 et seq.

2. Crops listed are Paddy, Early Sesamum, late Sesamum, Groundnut, Chillies, Cotton, Pebrugale and Peaya (two varieties of bean) Maize, Tobacco, Pisinngon (dhal), wheat Gram, Onions.

3. This figure however omits about 10,000 acres of sugar cane cultivation associated with the sugar factory at Samaw.



(1)

Lindop in a survey of Myitkyina District (plain area only) found that, of all land under cultivation, 83.1% was under paddy, 3.6% was devoted to market gardens and 13.3% lay fallow. No comparable figures exist for any hill area. (2)  
Most of the plains rice crop is raised by wet cultivation. The number of varieties is enormous but they fall into three main classes. In Burmese terminology these are:-

- (a) Kauk-yin, early rains paddy sown in April and reaped in August.
- (b) Kauk-kyi, main crop paddy, sown in June and reaped in December.
- (c) Mayin, hot weather paddy, a catch crop sown in December and reaped in May.

The vin or hyin is an early maturing strain but has a substantially lower yield than the kauk-kyi varieties, (a) and (c) therefore represent only a small proportion of the total crop. (3) The only advantage of growing kauk-yin would seem to be to spread out the demand on labour at sowing, transplanting and harvest. Nearly all wet cultivation rice is started in "nurseries" where the seed is sown broadcast at a heavy concentration, 10 baskets (460 lbs) to the acre, and later transplanted, the final spacing being such that the original

1. Lindop (1) 10. No settlement report has been published for either Bhamo or Upper Chinthe Districts. Lindop's report does not include any part of the hill districts of Myitkyina.
2. Lepok a species of dry cultivation was formerly popular round Myitkyina. Scott (vi) Pt. II Article Myitkyina.
3. About 3% in all.
4. Broadcast sowing is reported here and there in the literature mainly from South Burma. Labour would appear to be the governing factor. Transplanting produces a better yield but if land is very plentiful it may sometimes be more economical to work a large acreage at lower yield. See Copeland (1); Anon (vi) p. 6.

ten baskets of seed are spread over about 10 acres. In the Burmese technique the nurseries are themselves well soaked and are flooded a few days after the seed has been sown, the seed being usually "sprouted" before sowing. An alternative Shan technique is to construct the nursery on a dry slope well cultivated and very heavily manured, <sup>(1)</sup> This too is the technique usually adopted by Kachins when they develop wet rice cultivation. The preparation of the soil for the main field is similar in both techniques. After the preliminary work of preparing the bunds (kazin) between the various irrigation plots, the field is ploughed and allowed to soak, it is then usually ploughed again and then harrowed, <sup>(2)</sup> At the time of transplanting, the "bed" is mud slime about 12" deep in which the workers sink up to their calves. It is thus extremely laborious to undertake wet rice cultivation without animal power.

It is computed that two men and two pairs of bullocks or buffaloes can prepare 25 acres of land to be ready for planting out by the middle of July assuming the first rains fall at the beginning of May. <sup>(3)</sup> 100 acres therefore represents

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1. The same alternatives between wet and dry nurseries have been observed by Copeland in the Philippines. In theory the dry technique is probably inferior. SUPERIOR
  2. Manuring practice shows great local variation and is additional to the routine described here.
  3. Burma (iii), 3.



the labour of 8 men and 6 pairs of animals. The transplanting of these 100 acres however represents a month's work for about 20 people. (1) Once the crop has been transplanted it needs very little attention beyond a regulation of the water supply. Harvest again makes heavy demands on labour but since the weather can then be relied upon there is not the same urgency. The peak labour requirement is at transplanting and if this process is not to be unduly prolonged all available labour must be marshalled for this task.

Lindop found that the average holding in his Myitkyina survey was 16 acres. He also found that the average household consisted of 2.55 adults and 1.56 children, and he also noted that the majority of households engaged at least one extra labourer for the agricultural season, this additional labour being provided by temporary immigrants from other districts. We can assume then that each household could, at the peak, provide a labour force of 3.5 adults, per 16 acres, which represents 22 persons per 100 acres, so that under these conditions transplanting could be completed in rather less than a month. This brings out the important point that under

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1. Scott (11) 259. "Ten women can plant an acre field in a forenoon."

Copeland (1) for the Philippines gives the much slower rate '8 women require 3 days to plant 1 acre.

normal conditions of wet paddy cultivation, - i.e. where cultivation is by plough -, the ~~peak~~ labour demand is uneven. There are periods of peak demand at transplanting and harvest, but otherwise labour is not fully employed.

Outside the dry zone, dry cultivation (Burmese ya; Shan hai) is of more importance to the Shans than to the plains Burmans. For all the lowlands peoples except in the dry zone it is a subsidiary not a main technique of cultivation and is chiefly used for such crops as cotton, chillies, sesamum etc. rather than rice. Scott described the technique as follows

"The place most generally chosen is a piece of forest land on the slopes of a hill or in broken undulating land. The trees are ringed to kill them, and the branches are lopped off, and heaped round the tree trunks. These hills are then set on fire usually just before the first rains are expected. The heat kills the trees if the ringing has not already done so. Meanwhile the land has been ploughed and harrowed in the ordinary way. The ashes are scattered over the fields and the harrow is dragged over them once more. Stubble leaves and branches are well distributed over the field in small heaps. The leaves and stubble below are set on fire, and smoulder till the earth is thoroughly burnt a brick red. These heaps are then spread out and the seed is sown broadcast when the rains begin ..... The process of burning the soil is most exhaustive and ruinous. The organic matter of the earth is volatilised, and the ash constituents only are left, in a highly soluble condition. The available plant food is thus freely taken up by the crop, which year by year becomes less." (1)



The chief point to note concerning this type of cultivation is the different emphasis of peak labour demand. Provided the ya is sufficiently level to be ploughed with cattle, the peak labour demand occurs at the period of initial clearing long before the beginning of the rains and before any work has started at all on the wet paddy land.

The only important difference between ya as above described and the standard taungya (hill ya) technique of the hill peoples is that the inclines are steeper so that cultivation is by hoe and dibble stick instead of plough and hoe row; furthermore, in the hills, taungya is usually the principal and not a subsidiary mode of cultivation and the principal crop is rice.

As in the case of wet rice, there are early and late maturing strains of dry rice and the earlier strains have a lower yield. There are also various special types, such as glutinous rice, which have special uses and which also, in general, show lower yields than the maincrop.

With taungya cultivation there are several nodal points of labour demand. The first peak demand is for the initial clearing and fencing of the hill field, but provided this initial work is not left too late there is no great urgency about it. The burning of the dried brush wood is left as late as possible otherwise the valuable ash will be dissipated by the winds; the ideal is to get a sharp but not violent al

of rain immediately after the main burning followed by a further dry spell during which the individual plots can be tidied up and prepared for sowing. Sowing is the second peak labour point and a critical one. Sowing cannot commence until the rains break, but it is desirable to get all the seed in as quickly as possible so that the rice has a chance to take root before the monsoon works up to its full vigour, otherwise there is danger of a "wash out". Incidentally although rice in tsungyas is sometimes sown broadcast it is more usually sibilbed in two or three seeds at a time at about 3" spacing. It should be noted that in jungle conditions there is usually no necessity for any process corresponding to ploughing as the ground is sufficiently broken up by the fire alone, but where the clearing is made from grassland or broken scrub the whole ground must be dug over with hoes. This type of clearing (Jinghpaw: hkaibang vi) which is common along the China border and in North Hsenwi has therefore an additional labour peak following the burning and preceding sowing. Its effect however is not so marked as might at first sight appear. As noted already this type of land is always "opened" with a crop of beans or peas, the rice being grown on land which has already been cultivated for one or two seasons. Where this is not the case the additional manual labour of hoeing over a whole field of unbroken turf would be extremely heavy.



Following the completion of sowing there is a steady labour demand throughout the growing season for weeding. (1)  
 The efficiency with which this is carried out depends upon individual enthusiasm, and it commonly involves only about half the total labour force, namely the female half! It is however an important task and if weeding ever ceases altogether because of some peak labour demand elsewhere the consequences may be serious. One of the most interesting features of Hpialang was that its cultivation area included normal yi, hkaibang yi, and terraced wet paddy cultivation (hkauna). Most households had plots in at least two of these areas and some in all three. As the labour programme for the different types of cultivation was non-synchronous this was not unduly difficult to organise except in respect to the weeding of the yi. The peak labour point for the hkauna, - i.e., transplanting - involved the use of the entire adult strength of the community. This meant that for three important weeks the weeding in the taungya field was neglected altogether. This neglect could have been made good if the whole available labour force had been switched over to weeding as soon as the transplanting was over - but in practice this only occurred in a few exceptional households.

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(1) For the Jinghpaw "the growing season" is magang ta "weeding time".

At recognised nodal points of labour demand - i.e., for clearing and sowing on the taungya and for transplanting on the hkauna, - work is organised on a team basis; the composition of the working team being in practice based on kinship, ties. But at less critical points in the working cycle work is organised on a household basis. Thus, except in the case of the ritually protected "chief's yi" mentioned in Chapter 3, reaping of taungya fields is seldom organised as team work; weeding of taungya is nearly organised on a household basis and is normally deemed a woman's task.

At Hpalang the introduction of hkauna as supplementary to the traditional taungya technique had, logically speaking, converted the weeks immediately following transplanting into a "nodal point of labour demand" for weeding work in the taungya. Nevertheless weeding labour continued to be organised on a household basis and in consequence was often inadequately carried out.

With the Kachins generally the first cereal to be harvested is the maize, followed by early rice (mam nloi), followed by main crop rice. Of the latter the taungya is usually several weeks ahead of the hkauna (wet paddy).

Since, comparatively speaking, early rice is a low yielding crop, only sufficient of it is cultivated to tide



over the estimated gap in food supplies between the end of the maize and the beginning of the main crop harvest.

From the labour point of view the main harvest is a fairly leisurely proceeding. Good weather can be relied upon and as a rule there is no need to work to a fixed programme.

#### (6) Theoretical Analysis of a Critical Food Situation

With this background picture of the overall labour demand situation and the practical alternatives to rice production in mind we can proceed to examine the critical conditions for food scarcity under somewhat hypothetical conditions.

In order to reduce the variables under consideration to practical proportions I propose to consider a hypothetical society in which all other economic activities other than the production of food are of secondary importance and in which rice is the only food crop that needs to be considered. These hypothetical conditions are not really so abstract as might be supposed. As we have seen, in many instances, rice is the only food crop of any importance (in terms of labour utilisation) and since we are concerned only with critical conditions it is valid to presume that for a while the whole available labour force can be employed in agriculture. Thus for example in the case of wet paddy

cultivation the first peak labour demand is of fairly short duration, but, while it lasts, it is true both of rural plains and hill communities that practically the whole available labour force is absorbed in the dual tasks of transplanting seedlings and preparing plots to take the seedlings.<sup>(1)</sup>

Under such limiting conditions of labour supply and single crop working certain relations can be shown to exist between a number of complex factors in the economic situation.

Under these conditions the amount of paddy produced by the labour force of the community in any one season is equal to the annual consumption of paddy by the total population of the community. If the different variables concerned be expressed as a set of algebraic functions then the equation can be written in symbolic form.

Suppose the total population be the equivalent of  $N$  standard adults for purposes of consumption, and that the maximum available labour force is  $n$  standard adults.

Estimations of the normal ratio  $n/N$  have been made by a number of writers and it probably usually lies between .4 and .6. I will write  $n = kN$ .<sup>(2)</sup>

If the annual consumption per head be  $c$  units the total consumption is  $cN$ .

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2. See Firth (11) 74. Text and footnote.

1. Christien, (1), 114.



If the mean yield be  $\bar{x}$  times the quantity of seed  
 (1) sown; the rate of sowing be  $\bar{g}$  baskets per acre of land  
 cultivated in any one season;  $\bar{y}$  be the ratio of land  
 cultivated in one season to the total land under a  
 cultivation cycle;  $\bar{A}$  the total map area controlled by the  
 community; and  $\bar{pA}$  the proportion of that map area which under  
 existing economic and technological circumstances is  
 (2) considered capable of (or worth while) cultivating. Then  
 in terms of these functions the annual yield is

$$\bar{x} \cdot \bar{g} \cdot \bar{y} \cdot \bar{p} \cdot \bar{A}$$

and the equation stated above can be written

$$cN = \bar{x} \bar{g} \bar{y} \bar{p} \bar{A} \quad \text{or} \quad \frac{cN}{\bar{x}} = \bar{g} \bar{y} \bar{p} \bar{A}$$

This gives the ratio  $\frac{N}{\bar{x}}$  in terms of the other variables

$$\text{namely} \quad \frac{N}{\bar{x}} = \frac{\bar{g} \bar{y} \bar{p} \bar{A}}{c}$$

Now in any particular given situation the factor  $\frac{\bar{g} \bar{y} \bar{p} \bar{A}}{c}$   
 can be readily determined from empirical observation even  
 though it will not be the same in any two different  
 localities. What this implies is that there is, for any  
 given situation, a calculable limiting value for the ratio  
 $\frac{N}{\bar{x}}$  or alternatively  $\frac{N}{\bar{x}}$

- 
1. This is the normal method of assessing yields in Burma.  
 of Lindop (1); also in S.E. Asia generally. See Copeland (1).
  2. Note  $\bar{p}$  is a marginal factor. Other things being equal  
 if  $\bar{p}$  is increased mean  $\bar{x}$  will decline.

This implies that if the yield falls below a certain figure the local population cannot support itself whatever the size of the population may be.

In a sense this is of course perfectly obvious from first principles but it is a point that seems to be generally ignored in discussions of "overpopulation" and "pressure on land resources".

It is easily appreciated that there is an upper limit of crop yield for any given area and that if the population is too large it cannot feed itself; but it is apparently rather less obvious that the yield may be so low that no matter how small the population it still will not be possible for it to feed itself from its own crop resources.

Comparison of my own observations at Hpalang with a number of published sources relating to rice production in North Burma and Yunnan lead me to the conclusion that where the mode is wet rice cultivation employing plough cattle then  $n$  can be as low as .22 adults per acre in which case the critical value of  $x$  need be no more than 5.2  
(1)  
baskets of dry paddy per acre.

The reader need not take any particular cognisance of these numerical values. The point here is that in practice

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1. Lindop (1); Tawney (1); Burma (111); Anon (v); Burma (11); Copeland (1); are the sources on which this very general inference is based.



irrigated wet paddy land under plains conditions where cattle can be employed would seldom give a yield of less than  $x=20$  even in most adverse circumstances. In practice the average for all Burma is rather over  $x=30$  and yields as high as  $x=60$  are not uncommon. In other parts of the world such as China, Japan and Spain measured yields well in excess of  $x=100$  have been recorded.<sup>1</sup> In other words with wet rice cultivated with cattle in the plains there is an enormous margin of safety. In all practical conditions the amount of food produced will be considerably in excess of that actually required to feed the population necessary to grow it. This in turn implies a considerable residue of wealth which can be converted in numerous alternative ways into an improved standard of living for the people concerned. One may generalise therefore ~~therefore~~ that plains rice growing communities such as the Shan and Burmese, in which the whole of the available labour force is employed at least part time in the cultivation of rice, are inherently prosperous communities. A rice growing community under plains conditions is only likely to run into conditions of economic scarcity if the population is so large that the land is fully taken up and a large proportion of the available labour force cannot be usefully employed even part time on rice cultivation; limiting conditions of this latter type prevail in large

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1. Copeland (1)

parts of China and Bengal.

Very different limits are set to the ratio  $\frac{n}{x}$  if the conditions studied are those of shifting taungya agriculture in which no animals can be employed. In the absence of animal power the output per unit of labour naturally falls. The precise critical values will no doubt vary greatly according to different local conditions but such figures as I possess suggest that the critical yield range lies usually between  $x=20$  and  $x=24$ , the corresponding values of  $n$  being between .84 and 1.0 adults per acre of land actually under cultivation in any one season. In other words since cultivation without animals requires more men per acre, the minimal yield must be higher in order to feed those extra mouths.

But in this case the minimal yields and the practical yields are much closer together, indeed it appears that many practical yields are well below the minimum for self sufficiency.

Practical yields from taungya cultivation show great variation. In the Nam Tamai I was told that yields as low as  $x=2$  were quite common and that  $x=10$  was considered exceptionally good. In the North Triangle claims are made as high as  $x=70$ . This may be an exaggeration but in this area taungya yields are certainly as high as good irrigated plains rice, i.e., yields in excess of  $x=30$  can be relied upon. In Npalana allowing for the optimism and boasting of informants it appeared that a taungya yield of  $x=35$  was a bumper crop;



$x=25$  was about average; and  $x=15$  not at all uncommon. If I am correct in saying that the "critical yield" usually lies between  $x=20$  and  $x=24$  these figures imply.

- (a) that the Nam Tamai area is invariably a long way from being a self sufficient rice economy;
- (b) that the North Triangle should have a substantial annual surplus;
- (c) that the Hpalang area is probably on the brink between a balance and an unbalanced economy.

Presented in this way without the full weight of supporting numerical data all that one can say of this demonstration is that it is suggestive; nothing is proved. On the other hand the above conclusions agree well with the facts as they appear to be.

Now taungya conditions at Hpalang though far from ideal are by no means adverse as the general average of Kachin Hills conditions go. There are certainly areas on the west of the Sinlun Hills and in the Northern Shan States where the normal expectation of yield is very much worse. In other words, if I am correct in saying that the critical values of  $x$  normally lie between 20 and 24, then it is certainly true that there are large areas in the Kachin Hills where with taungya technique and a virtually one crop economy no population can support itself however small; on the other hand there are a few areas (such as the North Triangle) where, despite the fact of a single crop taungya economy, production is greatly in excess of the immediate requirements of any population actually employed in cultivation.

### Implications of differential rice yields.

If the foregoing analysis is correct it necessarily implies political and economic inter-relationships between different local areas in the hills and between certain areas of hills and plains. Those areas of either hills or plains where there is a surplus of production over immediate local requirements can be expected to contribute one way or another to those areas where there is a basic deficiency. Let us see how this hypothesis fits the facts.

The fact of an annual rice surplus in the North Triangle is well established. The surplus is traded both to the west into the Sumprabum area - (from whence there was formerly a return trade in salt) - and also to the east and north-east into the Waru and Nung tracts. Both these regions are clear cut deficiency areas in terms of the theoretical analysis of the last section.

Significantly both these areas were formerly dominated by the powerful chiefs of the Triangle; even today under the British regime the influence of these chiefs persists, - an example is the influence of the Mashaw duna over the Nungs to the north-east mentioned in Chapter 3.

In pre-British days the relative prosperity of the Triangle compared with neighbouring areas was very marked. Young, one of the few travellers to visit the area prior to large scale British intervention writes in glowing terms



"This district is a populous and fertile one and is well watered by numerous streams....There are numerous large villages whose inhabitants are evidently prosperous and in a far higher stage of civilisation than the wild tribes of the Chinese frontier. The land is chiefly covered in thick forest but large areas adjoining the villages are under cultivation; quantities of rice are grown.....good roads have been made between the villages and the one by which we travelled was evidently a main route and though of course not metalled was well kept and properly graded and drained<sup>1</sup>....."

The area here described is well away from any main trade route and some hundreds of miles from any important trade centre. The route Young was traversing leads to China through Htawgaw in one direction and to Hkamti Long in the other, with a side track over the "Daru Nkyet" into the Hukawng Valley. At this period the Chinese were making a slight use of this road to transport amber from the Hukawng to China but the trade cannot have amounted to much.<sup>2</sup> There is no indication that ~~members~~ <sup>INHABITANTS</sup> of the Triangle area went outside the area to work for wages; or that they produced any cash crop. Opium was cultivated but Young comments that local demand was much greater than supply.<sup>3</sup> In short the prosperity of the Triangle at this period must have been due to its surplus rice production; there was no other important source of income.

So far as I know no other dry paddy area in the Kachin hills has a consistent, dry outturn, average yield in excess of the marginal range 20-24. This range is in fact just

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1. Young (1), 168.
  2. R.N.E.F. various references.
  3. Young (1), 171.

about the average, in most areas, for a "good year". This means that in most cases local rice supplies must be supplemented from outside sources. Under present day conditions there is no great difficulty about this. All the southern areas have large numbers of men away earning good money in the army, or as coolies on sugar plantations, or forest work; most of whom send at least a proportion of their wages home. On top of this the P.W.D. has a heavy annual expenditure in the hills on road upkeep and most of this is dispensed in the form of coolie hire to local Kachins. Although government takes a considerable sum back again in the form of house tax there is an ample cash surplus left in the hands of the villages.

Apalang was probably nearer to being self supporting than most villages in the southern Kachin area as it possessed a considerable area of plains wet paddy worked by animals, but the total rice deficiency in 1939/40 was quite marked and could be easily observed at the 5 day bazaar at Lweje. Nam nloi, early dry rice, began to become available about the first week in October, and for several weeks the Kachins sold small quantities of rice to the Shans, not because the Shans were really in dire straits but because this succulent new crop was about 6 weeks ahead of anything the Shans could expect from their own wet paddy fields. During the winter months the Kachins had little need to trade in rice though they



continued to sell vegetables and minor forest products to the Shans. Then in the summer the pendulum swung the other way. Kachins begin to buy rice from the Shans about the beginning of June and continued to do so right through the wet season until the early rice becomes available again in October and the cycle starts again.

In contrast to this the Mwakawng is an area admirably adapted to wet paddy cultivation and one might expect again to find a self sufficient prosperous community.

Reports of the 1890 period and earlier do in fact show the inhabitants of the Mwakawng as exceptionally prosperous, but the community of that time was culturally very composite consisting of the Kachins, their "slaves" (who were very numerous) and the local Shans. On the other hand Darlington<sup>1</sup> with several years personal experience up to 1942 regarded the Kachins of this area as generally degenerate and "so lazy that despite their opportunities, there is an annual food shortage."

No doubt the most immediate cause of this contrast is the drastic economic disorganisation caused by the compulsory slave releases of the period 1926/28 to which reference has already been made, but in part it is a reflection of the tendency to regard the Kachins of such an area as a properly self sufficient community distinct from their immediate neighbours

1. Rev Evan Darlington. Formerly a Missionary at Mainghwan under the B.O.W.S. (PERSONAL COMMUNICATION.)

the Shans. In fact they are not so distinct.

While most Kachin villages in the Mwakawng at the present time (i.e., up to 1942) have some wet paddy land and some laungya, their main effort is devoted to opium cultivation. Conditions for opium cultivation in this area are very favourable and the market was a very profitable one owing to the increasing restrictions upon cultivation imposed by Government in other parts of the Kachin area.

At the beginning of the rains (i.e., about May) the Kachins trade their opium to the Shans in return for paddy; but by December the Kachins are themselves short of opium and buy back opium from the Shans with their new crop paddy. This procedure Darlington regarded as clear evidence of improvidence and laziness. But in fact it appears to be merely a symptom of a complicated credit structure involving elaborate land mortgages as well as political obligations between the various parties concerned.

Darlington agreed that the Kachins appeared to be always in debt to the Shans, but that no mortgage seemed to be ever foreclosed and that in any case the Shans had no means of enforcing payment.

The only rational way to look at such a situation seems to me to regard the Kachin-Shan complex as a single community in which the Kachin and Shan elements appear as classes rather than distinct culture groups. In this particular situation



the Kachins are for the time being politically dominant and are thus able to gain for themselves extra leisure at the Shans expense.

But it is even doubtful whether there is any real advantage in making the distinction between Shan and Kachin in such a context.

By Shan, Darlington means people who live at Maingkwan or Tare (Dalu), speaking Shan, wear Shan costume, live in Shan type houses, and are Buddhist; by Kachin, he means people living in smaller villages in Kachin type houses, speaking Jinghpaw dialects, and wearing Jinghpaw clothes and "animist" by religion. The distinction seems clear enough, but at the aristocratic level at any rate there is considerable inter-marriage between Kachins and Shans thus defined and at Ningbyen there are "Shans", living under a Kachin Chief, who are clan brothers of some of those in Maingkwan, but <sup>WHO</sup> speak <sup>N</sup> Kachin, wear Kachin dress and are at least as much animist as Buddhist.<sup>1</sup>

The point that I would make is not that the observable cultural distinctions in terms of dress and languages are meaningless, far from it; they are significant but not in the economic context. If it is legitimate for purposes of political and economic study to class Atai, Maru, Gauri, Jinghpaw, Lisu, Lashi etc., into one lump and label them

1. For details relating to the Shans of Ningbyen see

as Kachin, then it is equally legitimate, in conditions such as occur in the Mwakung to treat the combined Kachin-Shan community as a unity. If this is done there is no difficulty in appreciating that over a period certain lineages from one language group may move into the other and so "become" Kachin or Shan as the case may be.

Further analysis of the critical formula. Effect of Variations in  $p_A$ ,  $x$ , and  $y$ .

The conclusion we have just reached, namely that given the existing rice orientated economy the population of most parts of the Kachin hills cannot exist unless they maintain an intimate economic relationship with the peoples of the plains is one of far reaching importance with considerable long range political implications. For the moment however let us examine further the somewhat hypothetical society previously considered.

What for example is the relationship in abstract terms between the population  $N$  and the area cultivated  $p_A$  and its rate of rotation measured indirectly by  $y$ ?

Under the extremely adverse agricultural conditions often encountered in the hills the concept of marginal land is of some importance. No doubt from the rigidly practical point of view there is nearly always some more land which might, at a pinch, be brought into the agricultural cycle by sacrificing other interests. But in practice the other



Interests cannot be ignored. Apart from the space occupied by the village itself, land must be reserved to provide thatching materials and sometimes fuel,<sup>1</sup> certain areas have ritual associations<sup>2</sup>, pasture must be provided for the cattle and so on. In practice therefore quite apart from the complications of topography considerable reas of a village's total territory must be excluded from the agricultural cycle. The maximum value of  $p$  therefore never approaches unity and the most that can be said is that whenever a village finds itself compelled to resort to two year cultivation or to reduce the rotation cycle much below the optimum - which in most types of jungle appears to be not less than 15 years - then the value of  $p$  has in fact reached the practical maximum.

On this basis it can be asserted very positively that throughout the whole of Sinlum Hills that maximum has been reached. The only type of event which could alter this situation at the present juncture would be for the Forest Department to cancel its hold on certain areas of reserved forest. But even if this did occur the relief would only be temporary and would effect only a limited number of villages.

While the precise value of  $p$  in any particular locality can only be determined empirically one might have thought that the value of  $y$  was determinate.

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1. Generally speaking fuel reserves are only necessary when the bulk of the land has gone to grass.
  2. Such ritual associations may themselves be economically important. Stevenson somewhere has pointed out that under Christian influence Ching have sometimes cut down the sacred groves surrounding the village spring with disastrous consequences.

In a system of rotational shifting cultivation y is a measure of the fallowing period and the rate of rotation. Since shifting cultivation of the taungya type is a technique of world wide distribution, one would have expected its optimum form to be known. This does not appear to be the case. Robertson in 1944 held the post of Agricultural Adviser to the Government of Burma and to the Chief Civil Affairs Officer, Burma but could only write in very general terms about the optimum rate of plot rotation. The following quotation is based upon observations made in the North Triangle in 1944

"To get a good crop the first thing to do is to get a good and timely burning, and if possible the period of forest should be long enough (20 years) for the tree growth to become sufficient to kill all small undergrowth, grass and weeds and to have given a lot of leaf fall for fertility. If this is achieved no pre-sowing weeding is required, work is generally facilitated and of course the burn is good and crop conditions favourable. But to get a good burn certain other things are necessary.

The forest growth must be of good type and undesirable types must be few, e.g., plenty of small branches etc quickly drying, not many large trees etc...."<sup>1</sup>

He also notes that the actual rotation in this area ranges between 10 and 20 years.

There can be no question that conditions for taungya in parts of the Triangle are ideal and the practice here must be considered the optimum. But 20 years seems to me too long; it has to be remembered that in the climate of North Burma

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1. Robertson (1) Para V.(2)



jungles trees can reach a very substantial size in 20 years, and there is a definite disadvantage in having the timber too heavy. For this reason I consider 15 years the ideal rotation for straight forward rice taungya in suitable jungle.

Such a rotation clearly involves a very large total area per unit of population; in the symbols of my equation  $y$  has the low value of  $\frac{1}{15}$  so that  $A$  is correspondingly large. Under such conditions a fairly low overall population density will in fact be all that can be sustained under optimum technical routine. In practice it would appear that in the Burma-Assam Hills there is, in this sense, a shortage of land whenever the overall density of population exceeds about 14 to the square mile.

Where the population density exceeds this figure taungya can still be worked but not under optimum conditions.

Now if we examine what are the most obvious modifications to the standard taungya technique that are likely to be introduced as a response to an increase in population density above the optimum, we shall arrive at precisely those alternative forms of land use which have already been mentioned earlier in this Chapter as actually occurring in the Burma-Assam region. This surely is highly significant; it suggests strongly that the various observable techniques are merely adaptations of a standard theme to fit the labour and population conditions in different local situations.

If the population increases above the optimum then the following are the most obvious means of meeting the resultant deficiency situation.

(i) The size of the annual clearing may be increased while maintaining the original procedure of cultivating ~~any~~ one plot for only one year at a time. This implies raising the value of  $y$ . In this way it is reasonably practical to reduce the fallow period for any one plot to about 8 years. This will result in a long term decrease in fertility and a general replacement of the virgin jungle growths by permanent secondary forest. Weeding labour in the taungya will be greatly increased and there will be a net decline in  $x$ , (mean yield per acre). Certain of these difficulties can be avoided by stimulating the growth of special types of secondary growth which are specially valuable in providing leaf mould during the fallow period. The gunatorium serves this purpose with the Lushai (Lakher)<sup>1</sup> and the Kachins of the Sinlum Hills plant the seed of a species of quick growing beech (maibau) along with their rice seeds so that there will be a quick recovery after the harvest. This latter procedure is now carried out under Government instructions but the technique is of indigenous Gauri origin.

(ii) Some further relief from the shortages due to

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1. Parry, (1), 76.



increased population can be obtained by cultivating the same land two or more years in succession before allowing it to fallow. Not only does this result in direct chemical exhaustion of the soil due to the double cropping, but there is a danger that in the prolonged exposure a large portion of the valuable topsoil will be eroded. This in turn will result in inferior secondary jungle growth when the ground is finally fallowed. To counter erosion of this kind it may be advantageous to develop terracing of the dry taungya fields. Dry terraces of this kind have been developed by some Naga groups; a fact which has led Hutton to itemise this trait as one of the racial characteristics of "the Non-Khmer stocks"<sup>1</sup>

(111) Still more intensive use of the land can be obtained by the device of crop rotation. The alternation of bean crops with cereals is common throughout the whole region wherever there is marked pressure on the land, and this technique reaches its most highly developed form precisely in those areas where the taungya system is most severely overstrained - namely the Chin Hills, the Nam Tanai, and the Wa States.

The best account we have of intercropping the crop alternation associated with taungya is due to Stevenson.

1. Hutton in Smith (1) Introduction xii. In contrast to this curious hypothesis the cultivation of rice in this area is said to have been introduced by an Aryan or Dolicephalic-Leptorrhine racial strain!! (Ibid, xiii).

Unfortunately there are some marked inconsistencies in his account which make the facts hard to interpret.

According to Stevenson the normal value of  $y$  in the Central Chin area is  $\frac{1}{3}$  but in the hot land of the Manipur River valley where rice is the staple and beans are not intercropped it reaches the extremely high figure of  $\frac{1}{2}$ , i.e. half the total cultivable land is under cultivation at any one time. Each plot is cultivated for 3, 6 or 9 years at a time.<sup>1</sup> He adds the rider that "the period for which any field is cultivated for a number of years depends almost entirely on the land available." This does not seem to me to make sense. If there are four distinct fields (lepil, equivalent to Jinghpaw yinwa) it makes no difference to the size of the population that can be maintained whether each field is cultivated for 3 years and fallowed for 9, or cultivated for 6 years and fallowed for 18. Furthermore Stevenson gives no explanation of how the rice growers of the Manipur River Valley manage to maintain the fertility of their taungya at all with such a high value of  $y$  as  $\frac{1}{2}$ .

(iv) In any case it is clear that taungya worked with the intensity achieved by the Central Chins has almost ceased to be a system of shifting cultivation. Practically the only means of still further increasing the intensity of land use is

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1. Stevenson, (vi), 31/33, 35 footnote, 114 footnote.



the construction of irrigated terraces whereby the land can be kept in almost permanent use. Burma Settlement Reports usually take the proportion of irrigated rice land lying fallow in any one year as  $15\frac{1}{4}$ ; this implies a value of  $y = .85$ .

### The Limitations of Terraced Wet Paddy.

Because under plains conditions irrigated wet paddy is palpably a better yielding and more reliable crop than dry rice grown in ya, Government officers have been very prone to imagine that the simple solution to the hill man's problem of land scarcity is the development of irrigated terraces. The fact that in several parts of the hill area, (notably among the Angami Naga, the Lashi near H<sup>T</sup>awgaw and the Gauri Kachins in the Sinlum area), irrigated hill terraces are worked with striking success has tended to confirm this view. The limitations of this technique have only slowly come to be appreciated.

The advantage of wet paddy in fixed fields over dry paddy in shifting fields are two:

- (i)  $y$  is much higher and therefore a much higher population  $N$  can be supported in any given map area  $A$ .
- (ii) If animals can be used, the factor  $n$  (minimum units of labour per acre of cultivation) is lower than if the cultivation is by hand, and a population can then be sure of growing far more rice than is immediately essential for its own requirements.

This second advantage however does not apply if the irrigated fields have to be worked by hand. On the contrary manual work in irrigated terraces is extremely arduous and a single unit of labour can work considerably less area of such land than of taungya.

It is not true that the field from irrigated hill terraces is consistently higher than that from taungya, though crops are probably somewhat more reliable. In any large system of terraces failures in the irrigation system are bound to be frequent and though some plots which are well watered may show a consistently high cutturn, others more marginal often fail altogether. I have frequently been assured by experienced Kachin cultivators that the mean yield from any but very long established terraces is lower than from good average taungya. The significance of the age factor is that in the process of constructing a terrace it is impossible to avoid the loss of much of the original top soil; it may then take many years to re-establish a satisfactory top humus.

If this reasoning is correct then there are two alternative incentives which might induce a group to turn to wet cultivation as an alternative to more traditional taungya dry rice techniques. In the first instance the development of terraces will permit a much denser aggregation on the ground. The correlation in this instance is large local settlements, large local labour force, manual labour, no animals, no improvement in standard of living over taungya



conditions. In the second instance wet cultivation, under plains conditions, with animals, permits relatively small groups to raise their standard of living. Here the correlation is moderate sized settlements, moderate labour force, draught animals, large production surpluses convertible into other forms of wealth.

Thus the relevant factor in raising the standard of living is not the wet paddy but the animal labour. But in the narrow steeply banked terraces that are unavoidable when terraces are constructed in steep hilly country, the use of animals is usually out of the question. The Nagas do not use them at all. The Kachins and Lashis use them only on lower slopes where conditions make this practical.

Finally there is the question of Capital.

Terraces such as those to be seen in the Naga Hills represent an enormous investment in human labour. If that investment in fact shows no marked return in terms of increased living standards, it is hardly surprising that most hill communities show a ~~marked~~ reluctance to embark on the construction of terraces even under strong Government stimulus.

My inference from this is that the construction of wet paddy terraces in steep hill country is to be regarded as a last resort device. It is undertaken only by those groups which for political or other reasons have need to live at a density of aggregation on the ground which precludes the

efficient operation of a system of shifting cultivation. It must be noted however that once the terraces have been constructed the associated large settlements are to some extent self perpetuating even if the political conditions which brought them into being no longer exist. The capital represented by a system of terraces is a "vested interest" which will not lightly be abandoned.

It is an observed fact that where villages with terraced cultivation exist in the midst of others with simple taungya cultivation, the villages with terraces are larger.<sup>1</sup> Without considering the historical reasons which compelled one group rather than another to resort to terraced cultivation it is easy to appreciate that, assuming a similar segmentary social structure in each, fission should occur much more readily in the villages dependent on taungya than in those with terraces. The heavy capital investment of the community as a whole that is locked up in the terrace structure is a strong deterrent against fission. The literature on the Angami Nagas is full of instances of quarrels between rival khels of the same village which have been prolonged over generations. One can hardly doubt that if it were not for the economic deterrent such feuds would lead to fission of the original group, and consequent smaller average village size.

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1. Valid for Naga Hills, Ntawgaw Area, Sinlum Hills.



The size of the village aggregate with taungya cultivation

The settlements of the Angami Nagas with their large areas of irrigated terrace number several hundred houses apiece. Some of the Chin settlements based on their intensive system of taungya are only slightly smaller but are usually less tightly aggregated. Structurally the Angami settlement is a "village cluster" composed of a number of "segments" or "villages" (khel) but from a distance the settlement appears as a single solid block of houses. The larger Chin settlements are likewise subdivided into segments (yeng) but these are more clearly marked and the houses are spaced sufficiently to permit each to have a small garden.<sup>2</sup> In the Kachin type of settlement as typified by Hpalam the tendency towards looser aggregation is carried further; each segment of the cluster is a clearly distinguishable village, each house site is well separated from its neighbour and has a spacious garden.

These three modes of aggregation correspond to variations in the density of population and hence to the value of land as a source of food; they are paralleled by contrasted agricultural techniques as described above. We thus reach the generalisation :- the greater population density in any local area, the more intensive the technique of agriculture adopted. But intensive techniques increase the value of land and hence

1. Stevenson (vi), 22.

2. Ibid 23

the larger the settlement, the more tightly aggregated it tends to be.

When terraced wet paddy is adopted the upper limit in the size of the local settlement is only reached when all readily accessible slopes have been terraced. I estimate that a village of 500 houses would require some 2 square miles of terraced land.<sup>1</sup>

With a taungya system on the other hand the low proportion of total cultivated land used at any one time implies that large settlements require a most unwieldy total farm area.

Assuming a yield of  $x=20$  and a 15 year rotation cycle ( $y = \frac{1}{15}$ ) my estimate is that settlements of various sizes need to control areas as follows<sup>1</sup>:-

Size of settlement No of houses.	10	20	50	200	500
Radius of circle that settlement members must control. <u>Length</u> <u>in miles</u>	1.2	1.5	2.7	5.4	8.6

From this it can be seen that taungya of this extensive type is quite impractical in conjunction with large densely aggregated settlements. A circle of 8.6. miles radius represent an area of some 225 square miles!

In practice in areas where this ideal type of slow rotation taungya is in operation, as in the Kachin Triangle, the

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1. The comparative values of these different figures are of more importance than the actual numerical values.



component villages of the village cluster tend to be widely dispersed. Segments of the same settlement group are often found several miles apart.

Where the population is too dense to permit this ideal form of taungya, even the modified forms of technique are often only possible in circumstances of great social inconvenience. In the Sinlun Hills for example despite the fact that the rotation cycle has been speeded up until  $y=1$  or thereabouts,<sup>1</sup> and despite the fact that many villages possess areas of terraced cultivation, it is quite common to meet cultivators working on fields 10 miles or more distant from their place of residence.<sup>2</sup>

Under such conditions it is general practice to build substantial huts in the yi fields and to use these as temporary homes during the working season. But the inconvenience is very marked.

From this analysis we may conclude that where taungya is the normal practice tendencies towards fission of the local settlement are favoured. From the opposite point of view, where overriding military and political considerations impose the model form of large local settlements, then this must result in the development of the more intensive semi-permanent forms of taungya cultivation, and ultimately to

1. The usual cycle is 2 years consecutive cultivation followed by 6 to 8 years fallow.
2. The position has been greatly aggravated in the past by the creation of Government Reserved Forests out of "fallow" jungle.

the last resort device of terraced wet paddy cultivation.

We see therefore that the different cultural variants we have considered may be considered as forming a continuously graded variation in respect to the factors of agricultural technique and density of population.

### The village aggregate in the Plains.

The modal plains village is dependent upon wet paddy cultivation worked with animals. Since the construction of wet paddy fields in plains areas does not represent a capital investment on anything like the same scale as a similar area of wet paddy field compounded of steep terraces, plains villages are not subject to the same direct economic deterrent against fission. On the other hand since plains villages, in conditions where land is ample, are almost always prosperous, social frictions tending towards fission may also be expected to be few.

In practice the modal form of plains villages seems to be a larger aggregate than that of hill villages practising extensive taungya, but smaller than that of hill villages based on intensive taungya or terraced wet paddy.

Diagram III (Graph) compares two adjacent areas - Sinlum Tract VIII (taungya of a moderately extensive type; y about  $\frac{1}{2}$ ) and the "Nam Wan assigned tract", a Shan Chinese

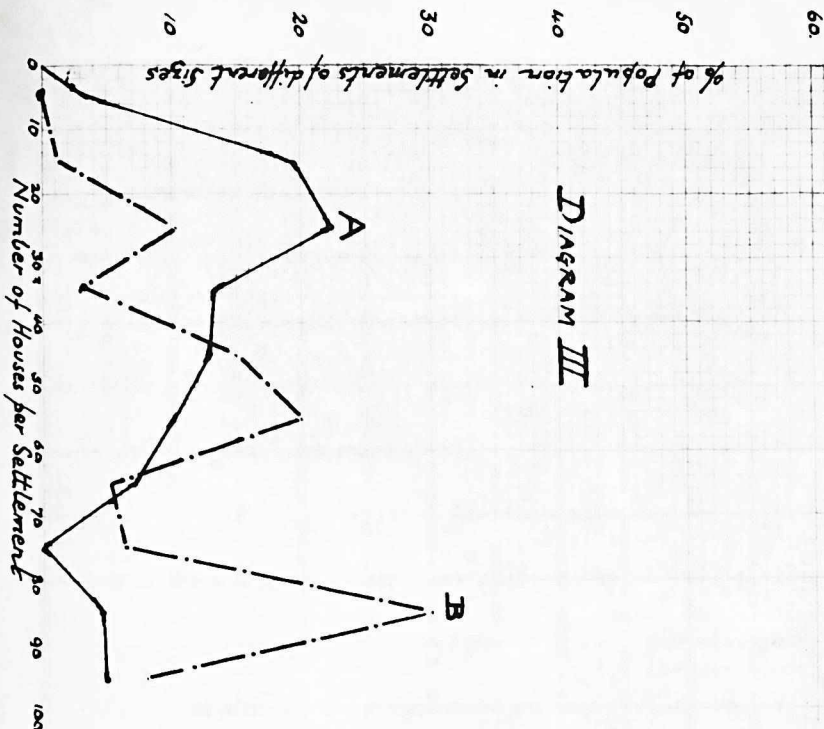


# DIAGRAMS III and IV

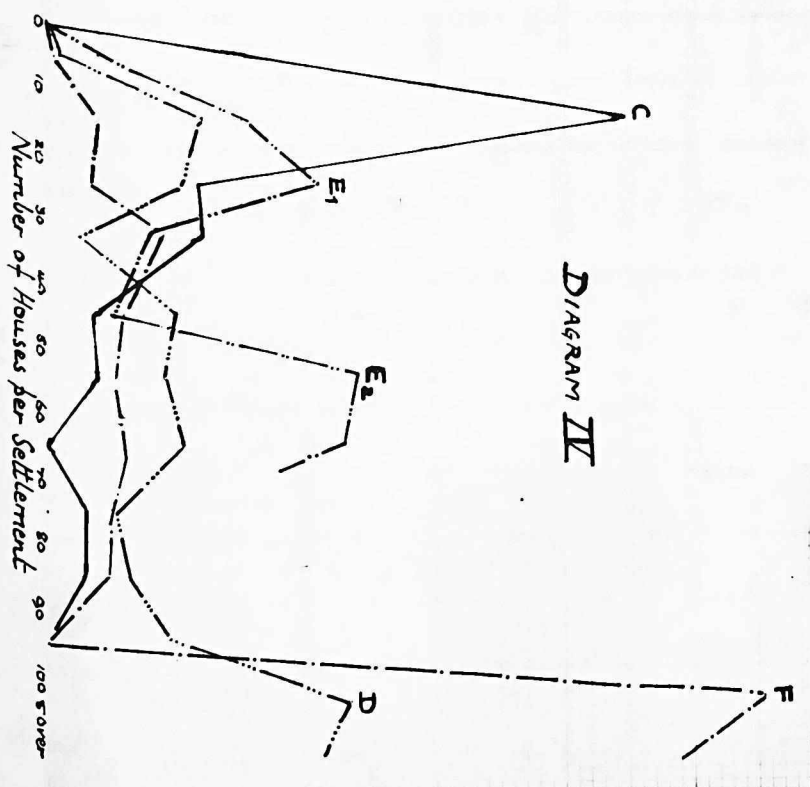
Modal types of village aggregate under different agricultural conditions.

- A. Sinlum Tract VIII Hill taungya
- B. Namwan Assigned Tract. Plains wet paddy.
- C. Sedon and Myitkyina Kachin Hill taungya
- D. Htawgaw (1921 Census Area) Concentrated taungya and hill terraces
- E. Sinlum, Northern Gauri Hill taungya with some hill terraces.
- F. Kamaling and Mogaung Hill Hill taungya Jade mines area. tract (including old Sana

## DIAGRAM III



## DIAGRAM IV



### Details of Samples.

\* Villages. Houses. Largest Village Houses. Smallest Village Houses.

Node.	A.	B.	C.	D.	E.	F.
	71	23	164	75	22	52
	1744	1132	2630	3002	671	2160
	92	92	84	158	66	235
	2	2	1	3	8	4

\* For meaning of Census villages see text.

Sources. Burma Gazetteer Myitkyina District and Bhamo D-district Vols. B based on 1921 village census tables.

plains paddy area formerly under the political control of the neighbouring Kachins. The graph (based on 1921 Census figures) shows the percentage of population in village settlements of different sizes. Two features are to be particularly noted. The contrast in mode between hill villages and plains villages and the fact that despite the contrast in mode there is not an absolute difference. The largest hill village (92 houses) is the same size as the largest plains village; the smallest plains village is only 9 houses as compared with the smallest hill village of 2 houses.

As noted at the beginning of the Chapter the statistics cannot be relied on very far, but both sets of figures measured on this graph should be subject to strictly comparable defects.

#### The graded contrast of Adjacent groups.

I have stressed here the relationship between size of settlement, closeness of village aggregation, crop yield, topography and technique.

This argument applies to modal rather than particular forms. Within any particular mode there is a wide range of variation and types overlap.

The contrast between "Culture A" and its neighbour "Culture B" is not a sharp difference as between black and

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white, but a gradual shading off as from white through all shades of grey to final black. Allegedly typical cultural<sup>u</sup> "norms" are contrasted modes of this type. If all the variational patterns in two adjacent cultures be taken into account it may frequently be found that the overlap is so great as to form a continuum of variation.

With the various Kachin groups this is certainly the case. The evidence provided by Grant Brown and Dewar<sup>(1)</sup> strongly indicates that the gradation of contrast does not end abruptly at the Kachin frontier but merges smoothly into neighbouring areas.

#### Economic Pressure and Cultural Change.

Implicitly the foregoing discussion is a criticism of the anthropological doctrines of "cultural integration" and social equilibrium.

The various Kachin groups appear to have the attributes of "whole cultures"; at anyrate the existing literature seems to presume that this is the case. According to accepted theory such "cultures" ought to show tendencies towards equilibrium and integration. But if my reasoning is correct many such culture groups in the Burma-Assam Hill area are so organised demographically that they could not be

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1. Brown G.E.R.C. - (1) and (11) Dewar (1)

economically or politically integrated and self sufficient.

My view is that contrasts which have been taken to represent different cultures (or "tribes") are best understood as contrasts of emphasis within a single economic continuum.

Some of these variations, - e.g., large village aggregates with terraced wet paddy-, may possibly tend in the direction of self contained integration and stability, but others, - e.g., small village aggregates with extensive laungya, - appear to be innately unstable. They represent forms of social organisation which cannot be maintained over any prolonged period unless either

- (i) Segmentation and territorial expansion can be carried on indefinitely
- (ii) There is close economic and political co-operation with other groups possessing relatively lavish sources of food supply.

Granted that such a state of affairs is unstable several different forms of change are indicated.

(i) If segmentation and territorial expansion permits a core group such as the Kachins of the Triangle to continue to operate laungya under ideal conditions for many generations, then the core group itself may possibly remain relatively stable, but the expanding segments, which are thrown off in order to maintain a stable population at the centre, will of necessity either cause or undergo change when they become involved with other groups outside the original central territory.



(ii) If economic stability is maintained by resort to co-operation with outside groups - notably plains communities possessing a rice surplus - then change will be induced in both the parties to the co-operation through the influence of diffusion.

(iii) Finally if the fact of population increase be accepted but no territorial expansion is possible and no symbiotic relationship can be established with other groups, then a necessary consequence will be the more intensive use of available land and this must result in a change in the whole outward form of the culture as expressed in its technical forms and mode of settlement.

#### "Expansion" and "Concentration" as an economic choice.

In earlier sections we have considered the effects upon technique and general land use consequent upon an increase in the size and density of the local population. I have already pointed out the existence of opposing trends, one leading towards fission of the local group and the maintenance of laungya at maximum extension and the other towards large local aggregates and intensive land use.

These alternative trends may in a sense be characterised as alternative forms of development "policy"; a policy of territorial expansion in which an increase in the factor  $N$  is met by an increase in  $A$ ,  $y$  being held constant, or a policy of territorial concentration in which  $y$  is increased and  $A$

held constant.

In using the word "policy" in this context I have in mind that economic choice is exercised. I do not mean to imply that the members of any particular culture group consciously plan out their long term future, but they do, as a group, exercise choice. What we as observers perceive as a difference in economic organisation is one of several possible solutions to a particular set of problems imposed upon the community by the de facto total environment, - political and geographical. What I am saying here is that the particular aspect of economic organisation that manifests itself in the size of the village aggregate has, in the conditions we are considering, a specific correlation with the technique of agriculture adopted. Agricultural technique is not a sort of mystical fixed routine imposed by custom but a matter of free and flexible economic choice.

The groups we are considering Kachins, Chins, Nagas, Was and the rest do not practice just one solitary agricultural technique but a profusion of widely different techniques. The knowledge of how to grow rice on taungya, or rice in terraces, or maize and buckwheat in alternation with beans and so on is generally available to all. In many cases a single village will practice three or four quite different techniques at different altitudes on a single mountain slope. What the ethnographers have picked out as the characteristic technique of any particular "culture"



is merely the modal form in that particular area, but there is nothing fixed about it. If circumstances change, perhaps only slightly, the economic preference of the group may shift and the ethnographer will observe what he regards as "cultural change."

Let us consider how this works out in the Kachin field. On the face of it, the small scattered settlements of four or five houses a piece in the hills immediately north of Myith, in a bear little resemblance to the densely packed Lashi villages of 100 houses or more, each with its wide block of terraced irrigation, in the vicinity of Htawgaw. Despite this contrast I argue that all the varieties of settlement found in the Kachin Hills are essentially similar. The variations merely correspond to the degree to which the "policy of expansion" or the "policy of concentration" has been adopted in the locality concerned.

#### "Expansion" and "Concentration" Variations in the Kachin Field.

"A policy of territorial expansion" may sound rather like the ethnologists migration theory in disguise; but there is a difference.

The migration theory holds that "the Kachins" emerged from their original stronghold in the Triangle about two centuries ago and marched southwards slaughtering all who opposed them. In particular they drove out the Palaungs and

Shans who formerly occupied the Sinlum Hills and the highlands of North Hsenwi.

Though I would hesitate to be dogmatic about dates I agree that the various modern varieties of "Kachin" culture have common roots in the Triangle. I agree too that that "culture" has only spread over the whole Kachin Hills Area during the last two or three centuries. This diffusion of culture from the Triangle outwards has certainly been effected by Colonists from the Triangle. But there is no evidence at all of any large folk-movements or military invasions. Such mass movements are quite impossible for where could the people concerned have come from?

The Colonists from the Triangle I suggest were merely the accruing surplus of population in that area. The population in the Triangle itself remained virtually stable and was thus enabled to continue to cultivate tsunaya under ideal conditions and thus maintain a high level of prosperity.

At any given time in any given direction the number of Jinghpaw Colonists thrown off by <sup>SEGMENTATION</sup> regimentation was probably very small but the process was incessant.

Political conquest was achieved by the anthropologically unorthodox procedure of converting the inhabitants of the Southern hills (Sinpraw and Myingnai) into Kachins.

This is not mere hypothesis. The evidence is substantial.



Genealogies collected among commoners in an area such as the Sinlum Hills quickly show that the present "Kachin" population is of extremely polyglot origin. Some of them are descended from slaves captured in war, some of them claim to be descended from indigenous "Palaung" conquered by the invading "Kachins", some of them are said to have been "adopted" from the Chinese or Shans and so on. Only the aristocrats claim any purity of original "Mkahku Jinghpaw" blood, - and as I suggested in the last Chapter - such claims do not stand up to any very close investigation.

The present population of the Sinlum Hills mostly label themselves Jinghpaw, Atsi or Gauri, with a few Palaung, Lisu and Chinese villages and scattered groups calling themselves Maru, Lashi etc. In 1835 Hannay heard that these hills were inhabited by "Palongs and Kakhyens";<sup>1</sup> and there are local traditions that the Palaungs ruled in this area before the Kachins. Are we to accept this? Does it imply that Kachins from the north drove out the Palaungs?

Who were the Palaungs of a century ago anyway? Hannay says they were the blacksmiths of the area,<sup>2</sup> a trade now exclusive to the A'chang or Malingtha. As I see it, all the

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1. Hannay (1) 92.

2. Ibid "The Palongs of the Chinese frontiers are, I am told, remarkably industrious, they are good dyers, carpenters and blacksmiths and all the daks or swords used in this part of the country are made by them."

evidence shows is that Kachin culture has come to be adopted by the inhabitants of the Sinlun hills within fairly recent times, it tells us nothing at all about the movements of people en masse.

The evidence does show that the centre from which Kachin culture has expanded is the Triangle. The traditions of the Singpho of Assam, the Tsasen of the Hukawng, the Jinghpaw and Gauri of the Simpraw, and of the Mkanu Jinghpaw themselves all agree on this point. Besides which there is a very high coincidence between the culture of the Singphos of Assam at one extreme, the Jinghpaw of North Hsenwi at the other and the Jinghpaw of the Triangle in the centre.

Just why Kachin culture should expand successfully while other culture contract is beyond analysis but the mechanism of extension will be shown up very clearly in later chapters.

There is no real evidence that the colonising segments ever anywhere drove out the previous inhabitants. Where the evidence does exist it is to the effect that the Kachins were invited to join in some local scrap between Shans or Palaungs and were then rewarded with land settlement rights



(remau sa) for their trouble.<sup>1</sup> The total numbers involved at any one time may well have been very small.

But for some reason these Kachin colonies formed a culturally dominant yeast which infected the whole area. Analysis of the present population of the Hpalang villages in the Sinpraw area suggests that the initial formative "core lineage" was often merely a single household which quickly acquired satellites of all sorts and descriptions including, "Palsungs", "Lisu", "Maru" etc., all of which, in the hills, appear to have tended to "become Kachin."

It is noticeable that there has been no eastward expansion of Jinghpaw culture into the Maru tracts. There are practically no Jinghpaw villages east of the mountain ridge to the west of the N'mai Mka so that in this area it is Maru rather than Jinghpaw culture that is dominant. Unfortunately there is no ethnographic account of any Maru group, so that there is no means of assessing

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1. Milne(1)20; R.W.S.S. 1891; Kawen Ma Naw<sup>Lu</sup>(1)41.

The opposite point of view is stated by Stevenson (v), 9 who asserts that Mukawng is derived from jukawng - implying the cremation mounds of the Shans slaughtered by the Kachins. ~~Mounds of the Shans slaughtered by the Kachins.~~ Historically however the first mention of the term Mukawng is in the spelling Mukhung. It is then not applied to a valley but to a single village located where modern maps show Jagun  
See Neufville (1), 346, 347, 352.

what is the critical differential between the two types of society. But it is interesting to note that not only have the Marus, in their homeland east of the N'mai, avoided Jinghpaw absorption but they have themselves expanded their own culture (or part of it) in several directions. To the north they are found as Mung and Dalu, and colonies of people speaking Maru dialects are found scattered throughout the Kachin Hills even in the core Jinghpaw areas such as the Triangle.

But there is this very striking difference between Marus east of the N'mai and Marus in other parts of the Kachin Hills. In the Mkahku, Sinlum Hills, and North Hsenwi, villages labelled Maru are almost invariably very small. In the Maru homeland east of the N'mai they appear to be on the whole strikingly larger than the Jinghpaw norm.

This can be illustrated by a graphical comparison (Diagram IV) between the size of villages in the Sadon Tract, - mainly Jinghpaw - and in the Htagaw Tract - mainly Maru and Lashi. The usual cautionary remarks on the value of the statistics must be noted but the two tracts are adjacent and therefore the statistical deficiencies may be presumed to be similar. The contrast in modes would be even more marked if six somewhat freak wet paddy villages were excluded from the Sadon figures.

This seems to indicate a basic difference in mode



between the typically Jinghpaw and the typically Maru; yet outside the Htawgaw area and the Nam Tanai the Maru rapidly merges into Jinghpaw culture.

Now what little we do know about the Maru shows that, east of the N'mai, agriculture is much more variegated than in the typical Jinghpaw rice-taungya economy. The Nainiaw and the immediate neighbours the Rawang (Nung) live in extremely severe surroundings but are enterprising and catholic in the number and variety of crops which they attempt to grow. Further South in the Htawgaw tract the Lachikaw (Lashi) go in for spectacular terraced cultivation somewhat on the lines of the Angami Naga, while the Lawkaw (Maru) in the same area, though working taungya, appear to do so more intensively and with more elaborate crop rotations than do most of the Jinghpaw.<sup>1</sup>

The inference is that, in this area with its extremely precipitous inclines, the inhabitants have been compelled to resort at least in part to the policy of concentration. That is not the whole story, for this is an area where Lisu and other Lolo groups are infiltrating from the east. It may be that political pressure have also been a "cause" of concentration. But my point is that the diagram demonstrates the fact of relative concentration, and this concentration is correlated with more intensive techniques of agriculture.

1. The relative self sufficiency of the Htawgaw-Htawlang Maru tracts in comparison with many of the Jinghpaw areas, was clearly demonstrated during 1942/45 when the whole of the country north of the Mali-N'mai confluence was isolated from the south by military operations.

But while the Maru in their homeland <sup>e</sup>East of the N'mai have resorted to large villages and more intensive agriculture this is not true of all the peoples labelled Maru.

It was seen that the Maru of the Htawgar<sup>w</sup> area having organised themselves for living at a more concentrated level than their Jinghpaw neighbours have themselves in turn resorted to expansion by means of colonising segments. But in this latter case the colonising Maru abandon their cultural mode of closely aggregated settlement and adopt the Jinghpaw style of maximum dispersion and very small villages. In the process they have become inextricably mixed up in the structural relations of Jinghpaw society.

The Gauri and Atsi and Maingthe appear to be products of fusion between Maru and Jinghpaw and Shan consequent upon this expansion. None of these groups exist in the Maru homeland east of the N'mai. They are found only in the areas to the south of the Mali-N'mai confluence where, by my hypothesis, both Jinghpaw and Maru have tended to be colonists.

Atsi is a dialect closely akin to both Maru and Lashi but remote from Jinghpaw; culturally the Atsi are usually "Jinghpaw with modifications"; they are all gunsa (autocratic) and their chiefs claim to be true Jinghpaw-Lahpai-Shan-Aura lineage. They are widely dispersed throughout the Htingnai



and Sinpraw regions.

Gauri as a dialect deviates only slightly from normal Jinghpaw, but the lineages of the Gauri, both aristocrats and commoners, are the same as those of the Atsi. Now while the chiefs of the Atsi and Gauri claim to be true Jinghpaw, their commoner lineages do not. Many of them admit a Maru origin. Others say vaguely that they "came from China", others have foggy connections with the Palaung or other supposed indigenes. The Gauri are found only in a strictly localised area in the Sinlum Hills immediately to the east of Bhamo.<sup>(1)</sup> Culturally they appear at first sight to be "typical Kachins" though their dress differs from the Jinghpaw of the north. The population concentration is somewhat high and in places they have developed elaborate terraced cultivation. Significantly the village aggregates are higher than in other Sinpraw Kachin areas but smaller than in the Maru tracts east of the N'mai.<sup>(2)</sup> Here then the Maru having "become Jinghpaw" have again adopted the more concentrated form of land utilisation found in the Maru homeland around Htawgan.<sup>W</sup>

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1. There are a few isolated Gauri villages in other areas which are recognised as very recent colonial settlements from the Sinlum area.

2. See Diagram (IV) notes E.1, E.2.

The A'chang or Maingtha who live in the Chinese Shan State of Mong Hsa eastward from the Gauri country are superficially Shan in culture, with a special reputation as blacksmiths. They speak a dialect of the Maru, Atsi, Lashi type. In this case it appears the process of colonisation has carried certain attributes of Maru culture out of the hills altogether into a plains environment.

But why, if both the Maru and the Jinghpaw were free to adopt an expansive taungya "policy" did each on occasion adopt the concentrated "policy", with its complication of terraced paddy?

I suggested earlier that the virtue of a large village is in its military strength. The virtue of terraced paddy is that it supports large villages with comparatively little territory. Terraced paddy and large villages are found today in three very significant localities in the Kachin Hills and scarcely anywhere else.

In the Htawgaw area, particularly at a group of Lashi villages not far from the China border which appear to be in a position to dominate any traffic coming in over the Hpimaw pass; at Wawchon east of Sadon in a position commanding the ancient trade route over the Kambaiti pass; in the Gauri country in positions dominating the old routes from Bhamo to the Taiping Valley. This I suggest is a significant correlation. There can be no doubt at all that the various



trade routes were of immense value to the group or groups which were in a position to tax the trade. This strategic position was worth fighting for, even to the extent of going to the trouble of building terraced paddy fields, when virgin forest was to be had for the asking forty miles away in less economically advantageous locations.

Perhaps this is pressing economic determinism rather far but it does seem to me a plausible correlation, and it seems to apply outside the Kachin field. Most of the Naga groups seem to resort to terraced paddy in a small way here and there, but the Angami, who alone go in for terracing as a basic technique, and who possess giant villages in consequence, are situated on what is now the main road between Imphal and Dimapur, and what appears to have been always the principal trade route in that area.

On the other hand I have direct evidence that the upkeep of hill terraces may be marginal under the conditions of peaceful security provided by the British.

In my observations at Hpalang I was puzzled by the fact that there were considerable areas of old terraces which had apparently been abandoned for years. Today, in the light of the labour yield situation analysed in this Chapter, I find it easier to understand. Under economic and political pressure terraces have an advantage over taungya, but if

part of the population can secure a living by some other means, - as a Government coolie for example, - then the extra effort required for the terraces is not worth while. It is more than likely that there is less terraced cultivation in the Sinlum Hills today than there was in 1888; a somewhat disturbing thought for well meaning administrators! (1)

The negative effects of externally imposed change.

The flux situation of constantly modifying and overlapping cultural groups which I have here presented has been treated as self determinant. The changes considered arise from causes inherent in the situation itself.

How are the changes modified when an extraneous force such as the influence of an external Paramount Power is brought to bear upon the situation?

In the particular instance of the British Administration and its influence upon self motivated developments in the Kachin Hills the course of events can be clearly traced in the Annual Administration Reports of the area.

In general it can be said that the British Administrators in the Kachin Hills have from the first possessed a confused theory of the general virtue and immutability of "traditional native law and custom". They have also deemed it to be

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1. cf. Aderson (1) 129 and illustration 89.



the paramount duty of the Government "to maintain law and order" and "to prevent disease and starvation" even if these two ends involve considerable financial outlay.

As a result Kachins of the present day have gradually come to learn that no political initiative by individual Kachins can alter the established order. But on the other hand in any situation of local economic crisis Government can be relied upon to step in with direct or indirect subsidies. Thus the basic motivations towards the "inherent" types of change discussed above have been removed, even though changes of a different kind may have been introduced.

In this sense therefore externally imposed change may have negative effects; negative change of this kind might be defined as "action by a Paramount Power which artificially stabilises certain aspects of the cultural situation in a particular locality, in defiance of inherent tendencies towards flux and modification."

The existing situation in the Sinlum Hills is an example of this.

When the British first occupied the area in the period 1890-1900 their first action was to stabilise the status quo. This was done partly to preserve law and order, partly to regularise taxation and partly to prevent what was thought to be a dangerous tendency for the Kachins to migrate

southwards. The principal means of stabilisation was to define village boundaries rigidly and permanently and to define precisely the jurisdiction of each chief and headman.

But the situation thus stabilised was in an economic sense essentially disbalanced.

The relatively high population density in this area in pre-British days had maintained itself by taxing the caravan trade between Bhamo and Tengyueh. This source of income was abruptly terminated under the British. True the British offered alternative sources of income by giving employment to the young men but this in turn tended to force the inhabitants to revert to taungya in preference to hand cultivated wet terraces owing to lack of labour to work the latter technique effectively. The economic consequences for the Eialue hills are potentially very serious. Owing to the excessive concentration of population and the government restrictions against migration, the land has been overworked and there has been a serious decline in the overall soil fertility. The full implications of this are at present masked because Government subsidies in the form of soldiers' pay P.W.D. expenditure etc. have steadily increased and now probably exceed the income value of the former toll charges. Because of this steadily increasing Government subsidy the Kachins themselves do not realise the precarious



economic state in which they now exist; they regard the Government as a sort of permanent benevolent institution which will always meet any temporary crisis. Therefore the basic structure of Sinium Kachin society has remained quite remarkably stable during the past 50 years (1) although at the same time neighbouring Shans, Chinese and Burmese have been passing through veritable revolutions.

As I see it therefore the intervention of the British Administration with its paternalism, and insistence upon law and order at all costs, has shielded this hill community from the economic implications of its artificially stabilised organisation. In this respect Western "culture contact" has served not to accelerate change, but to prevent it.

### Salt

So far the whole of the argument in this chapter has been built up from the consideration of limiting conditions in respect to the production of a single foodstuff - rice. This was justified by the very large proportion of total available labour effort actually devoted to rice production in much of the area under consideration. But even in the most artificial limiting conditions rice is not the only

1. For evidence see Chapter VII.

major essential; salt stands equally high as a prime necessity.

The economics of salt production in the Birma/Assam hill region are of great interest and relevant to our theme. Some areas produce a salt surplus and are deficient in rice; others are deficient in both rice and salt; others have a surplus of rice but are deficient in salt. These variations in the balance of production of two primary commodities immediately suggest important trade relations between the various areas concerned. Such trade, I am convinced, has in the past been of much greater social and political importance than has generally been recognised.

To obtain either rice or salt by trade implies of necessity the possession of some exportable good. Some areas have no exportable good other than the labour of their menfolk which is hired to their more prosperous neighbours, especially the Shans, in exchange for wages in kind. The Palaungs of Tawngpeng trade their tea for rice and salt and other commodities; the Wa trade opium mainly for salt; some Nages formerly traded salt for rice.

It seems probable that the exceptional size of some

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1. Scott (ii) 494; Milne (ii) 222.  
2. Scott (iv)



of the Naga village aggregates cannot be fully accounted for by the advantages of terraced agriculture which we have already discussed. The area however in which the size of the Naga villages is larger than can reasonably be explained in terms of rice production economics is also the main area of Naga salt production. The trade between hills and plains in this commodity was at one time substantial.

"In 1837/38 it is calculated that 5,000 maunds of rice must have been bartered with the Nagas for salt; the barter is 2 maunds of rice for one maund of salt or thereabouts"..... Salt is so scarce in Upper Assam (1) that many of the inhabitants are months without any."

This statement may be compared with Official statistics relating to the prices of rice and salt at Imphal (Manipur) and Kohima (Angami Naga Hills) over the period 1890/1905. (2)

It may be presumed that at the beginning of this period Manipur was still more or less dependent upon Naga salt. Direct British administration was established in 1891 and from then on, with improvements in communications, cheap salt from Bengal must have become increasingly available.

In 1890 the mean price of rice at Imphal was almost exactly half that at Kohima; this price differential in rice remained unchanged throughout the period under consideration, being approximately 15 seers per rupee at Kohima and 30 seers

1. Anon (11) 12.

2. Allen (1) pt 1. 76; pt 11, 137.

per rupee at Imphal.

But whereas in 1890 the price of salt in Manipur was  $1\frac{1}{2}$  times the price at Kohima, by 1905 it was the same in both localities and had fallen to one half the price previously recorded at Kohima. At Imphal the 1905 price of salt was therefore one third of what it had been in 1890, but the selling price of rice was unchanged. Thus a Kohima Naga bringing salt to Imphal could only hope to get one third the amount of rice that he had obtained 15 years earlier from the same load.  
(1)

Comparison of the size of modern Naga villages was given by Hutton and Mills with figures quoted by Mackenzie suggests that there had been a general downgrading in the size of the larger Naga villages though there has been no decline in total Naga population. The change in the value of local salt production is probably an important factor in this change.

In the Kachin Hills Area some localities are surplus and others deficient in respect to salt. The interchange of rice and salt between neighbouring localities was probably a factor of great importance in the overall political structure  
1. Kohima itself was probably a trading centre in salt rather than a producing centre.



under pre-British conditions. The fact that the British have made available cheap salt from south Burma is of dubious advantage to the community as a whole.

During the war years (1942-46) the absence of imported salt led to a revival of local industry so that it was possible to assess which areas really suffered from a local deficiency.

In the Hukawng supplies are ample, though around Taro at the western end Lachins trade rice to the Nagas in exchange for salt. The Nagas are the political subordinates of the Lachin chiefs concerned. (1) In the Nkashku area, the politically dominant Triangle trades rice to the subject groups west of the Mali who have a surplus of salt. The Maru areas east of the N'mai have sufficient salt for their own needs. The Shans of Nkamti long trade rice to the Lachins further south in exchange for salt.

The Sinlung Hills east of Nhamo are almost wholly deficient in local salt production. All early travellers mention salt as a major item of commerce between the hill people

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1. Norries (1) entry 7th November.

(1)

and their plains neighbours. The salt came partly from wells in the Katha area and partly as rock salt from Yunnan. This particular locality therefore was a deficiency area in respect to both rice and salt. Even from this bald statement of the facts, it can be seen that the introduction of cheap salt at such centres as Bhamo and Myittha must have had serious implications for those areas which formerly exchanged salt for rice. In the absence of metal containers the Kachin methods of production are very costly and cannot hope to compete with the ordinary market produce; but it is arguable that it might be sound government policy to equip the Kachin brine wells up to a stage of reasonably efficient production and then subsidize the product.

The traditional technique of production was to boil the brine in bamboo tubes which were replenished as the water evaporated until the bamboo section was solid with salt. The bamboo was then split open and the salt sold in the form of a cylindrical lump. The fuel wastage in such a procedure is

(2)

1. Hanny (1) 92.

"Besides the trade carried on at Bhamo by the Chinese, the Shans, Palongs and Singphos under China are great purchasers of salt, gunpee, dried fish and rice but particularly salt which is in constant demand - the salt which sells at 20 ticals of silver for 100 viss or Rs 20 for 150 seers is bought principally from Shinmaga ---- and from Manlu ---- two marches west of the Katha.

2. Bayfield (1) 254.



enormous. Granted efficient boiling pans the whole of the northern part of the Aechin area could readily be made self supporting in salt at a price not much above the free market price.

It should be noted that salt making is a dry weather occupation, since most of the brine wells are flooded out during the monsoon. The labour effort devoted to salt production does not therefore affect the agricultural labour supply.

#### Alternative uses of labour.

I have already asserted that any society which satisfies its immediate food requirements by local production and has labour in excess to spare for other things, can be said to be prosperous. It is a general characteristic of primitive subsistence economies that local production is primarily concerned with essential foodstuffs. But not all the hill peoples of Burma live at this subsistence level. Palaung tea and Wa opium are examples of commodities produced expressly for trade by groups deficient in basic foodstuffs. An alternative procedure is to sell not a specially produced trade commodity but the labour itself.

In the artificial one crop economy which we have considered for theoretical purposes, if the rice yield be high then there will be a surplus over and above the

immediate requirements of the population, this in turn will permit the cultivation of a smaller area and will release a part of the labouring population for other purposes. But likewise if the yield is very low, a better overall return may result from reducing the area of cultivation and sending a part of the labour force to work elsewhere for cash wages with which they may purchase the requisite additional salt and rice.

Under modern conditions this is a very general solution to the problem of scarcity. A high proportion of the younger male population are in the army, or the military police, or are away from home working as coolies either for Government agencies such as the P.W.D. or as hired labour among the Shans of the plains. It seems highly probable that service of this kind (1) is no novelty. Luce has even found contemporary evidence that members of the hill tribes from the present Kachin area were present as mercenaries at the siege of Hanoi (A.D. 862) in a Nanchao army. The earliest mention of Kachins in Shan and (2) Palaung records of Momeik, Tawngpeng, and North Hsenwi is not as raiders but as mercenary soldiers in the employ of rival Shan princes.

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1. Luce (ii) 270
  2. Milne (ii) 20.



In this connection my argument is that there is a normal economic incentive for part of the population of the hills to move down into the plains for temporary or permanent employment. In the past this has frequently led to permanent settlement in the plains and, as I would put it, cultural flux.

Under the British regime and the policy of segregation, settlement of Kachins in the plains is disapproved of, but the employment of Kachin labour by Government agencies has the same economic effect of making a part of the population no longer a direct burden upon local land resources.

Natural Products other than cultivated crops and salt:-  
Jade, amber, rubber.

There is one part of the Kachin Hills area which falls into a very special category from the economic point of view and that is the region comprising the south east Hukawng Valley and the hills west of Kamaing.

For nearly two centuries this area has been the main source of jade for all China; it possesses important amber mines; and for about 50 years from 1870 onwards it was an important source of wild rubber. I do not intend to attempt any detailed analysis of these trades. What I would stress is that owing to these special resources the level of the economy

1. The data is available in H.A. Herts (1) 104/130; Penzance (1); Scott (11) 246/8.

of this part of the Kachin area has for many years been at a very different level to that in other less accessible localities.

It is reported that in 1831 at least 600 Chinese and 600 Shans were engaged in business in the jade trade in and around Kamaing;<sup>(1)</sup> in 1874 the Burmese took an excise revenue on account of jade alone in excess of Rs65,000;<sup>(2)</sup> in 1921 the value of jade produced was assessed at Rs 1,001,343.<sup>(3)</sup> How much of this money passed through, or stayed in Kachin hands it is difficult to say, but the mines in question all belong to and are worked by Kachins.

The effect however has been to turn the Kachin culture of this area into something very different from what goes by that name in less affluent areas. The prosperity impressed even the earliest administrators. In 1898

"Mr English comments on the condition of the Kachin in the Mogaung subdivision and considers that he is quite as well off as the Shan who pays a much higher taxation there can be no doubt that the Kachins of the Mogaung subdivision are in a much more prosperous condition than those east of the Irrawaddy." (4)

Available data do not indicate how this prosperity correlates with the size of the village aggregate, but the tables in the Myittha District Gazetteer Vol.3, purport

1. W.A. Hertz op.cit
2. Ibid
3. R.N.E.F. 1922.
4. R.N.E.F. 1898.



to show the size of the "village tracts" in this area in 1921.

Assuming that a "village tract" is (as the Census states) a duwa's charge, the comparison of village tracts in the poverty stricken "Myitkyina Kachin Hill Tracts" and "Saden Hill Tracts" with village tracts in the "Mogaung Hill Tracts" should show the difference in scale of political authority between the two areas.

(1)

This tabulation (Diagram IV) is very striking. The contrast in nodes is so great that elaborate argument on the subject seems unnecessary. It shows more clearly than any number of words how defective and misleading any discussion of "Kachins" must be which assumes that their form of territorial organisation is of a standardised clearly defined type.

### Summary

Let us then summarise the argument as it has so far been developed.

Throughout the Burma Assam Hill area we have culture groups loosely labelled Kachin, Naga, Chin, Wa, Aor etc. and, at a more refined level of ethnographic analysis, by

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1. See Diagram IV nodes F. AND C.

a vast variety of other names. All these societies have certain features in common, and among each of the larger groups the same kind of variations occur.

While most of the groups cultivate rice, and cultivate it by the taungya (jhum) technique, there are, in each of these major areas, some groups which have adopted more intensive techniques involving crop alternation, terracing, and/or irrigation

While from a sociological point of view the structure of all the societies in question seems capable of analysis in terms of segmenting lineages linked ritually with their land, (somewhat on the lines of the modal Kachin form described in the last Chapter), yet in each of the larger groups apparently contrasted political themes have been noted which have been loosely described as "democratic" and autocratic". In the 1st Chapter I showed that, so far as the Kachins are concerned, this contrast represents little more than a contrast in the scale of the political aggregate, and is not to be regarded as a fundamental contrast in ideology. With modifications I suggest that the same thing is probably true of the supposed political contrasts found among Chins and Nages.

In this Chapter I have examined further the relationships that may be supposed to exist between the scale of



the political aggregate, and the pressure of population upon land resources. We have seen that among the Kachins the politically powerful groups are, as we might expect, those which control resources over and above their immediate requirements. These resources may be of several kinds e.g. a surplus of basic foodstuffs (as in the Mwakhu Triangle), wealth from minerals or other natural products (as in the Jalo Mines area), political control over important trade routes (as in the Sinlum Hills prior to 1850).

I have further shown that in areas which are dependent exclusively, or nearly exclusively, upon the direct production of foodstuffs by means of agriculture the size of the village aggregate, as distinct from the size of the political aggregate, can be correlated with the modal form of agricultural technique and with the modal practice regarding lineage segmentation. In this way I have shown that a community living in a large endogamous village divided into exogamous wards does not necessarily differ very much structurally from a widely dispersed community living in small nearly exogamous villages. There is at all times I argue a tendency to growth from one form to the other and the form actually taken up at any particular time is largely conditioned by acts of economic choice on the part of the members of the community.

I have shown that in general, large village aggregates in the hills are associated with relatively intensive methods

of agriculture. Where such methods have involved capital expenditure in the form of terracing then the large village aggregate is likely to survive beyond the historical circumstances that brought it into existence, owing the vested interest of the members of the community in the terrace structure. To say that large villages arise as a product of choice in response to the economic and political situation at a particular time does not therefore necessarily imply that all large village aggregates represent intelligent economic choices at the present time.

On the contrary it appears to me that the principle advantage of the very large village aggregate with terraced cultivation was military; all such aggregates ceased to be logical as soon as the British established their Pax Britannica. Again we see that effect of administration may be to introduce negative changes, in the sense that it may reverse the direction of a previously existing change process. Although the British approve of terraced cultivation they have in fact removed most of the incentive for making use of it.

I have already given a number of examples which serve to show that the customary ethnographic labels applied to <sup>H</sup>  
~~DIFF~~ ~~different~~ culture groups may represent only transitional phases in the appearance and behaviour of particular peoples, - that is if continuity be viewed in terms of the unity of the lineage over a period rather than that of the people speaking



a particular language or wearing a particular kind of dress. I have suggested that the great variety of "cultures" within the area we are considering may be considered as adaptations of the general "modal" Kachin pattern to particular local circumstances. As such, provided there are no great political upheavals which upset the balance of the area as a whole, these "cultures" may be considered reasonably long term and stable. But the actual population is in flux; there is a constant shifting of individual lineage groups from place to place and from one culture group to another.

Nearly all the various groups intermarry freely at their fringes. Strict tribal endogamy is only reported for the Red Karens (Karen-ri) and there the evidence does not seem to me at all reliable.

Intermarriage across cultural boundaries is in no way inconsistent with the fact that in all cases a much larger proportion of marriages take place within the linguistic group than are contracted outside it.

Although in most groups the modal behaviour is patrilocal marriage, yet matrilocal marriage is nowhere uncommon.

In the past slaves have constantly been taken and retaken from group to group, and slavery as often as not implies cultural adoption.

All these factors indicate that particular lineages may pass and repass from one culture group to another over

a period of generations.

So much for cultural interchange among the hill tribes themselves, but the implications of this present Chapter go much further than that. If we exclude perhaps the Moshu area and the Kharu Tracts East of the H'mai and possibly the Mukaung, there is no part of the Kachin area which can be considered as a self contained economic unit. In all other parts of the area the hill population is directly dependent upon economic relations with the plains. This has clearly been so in the past and it is absurd to think it will not be so in the future. A policy of partition and segregation such as is at present favoured by the British authorities is an absurdity; it can be achieved only by the contribution for larger and larger subsidies in one form or another, and cumulatively it creates a problem of unsolvable dimensions.

Without official interference, the free interchange of goods and services between hills and plains must constantly modify the former so that the contrast in culture between the two areas is never more than "skin deep". No doubt there has always been some hostility between hills and plains - the plains have what the hills have not, - and in times of trouble the hill people are likely to take advantage of their neighbours, but in the absence of a protecting Paramount Power the Hill Peoples, dependent as they are for their very



existence upon economic relations with the plains, cannot afford to indulge in any really long term deep rooted hostility. Today the hostility between Kachin and Burman and to a lesser extent between Kachin and Shan cannot be questioned; in my view the action of Government and of the missions is very large responsible for this. To this point I shall return in later chapters. Meanwhile we need to consider further from a theoretical viewpoint the political implications of the economic interdependence of hills and plains.

## CHAPTER V.

Political Relations between Hills  
& Plains.  
-----Introductory.

In Chapters VI and VII we shall consider in detail the problem of how hill communities and plains communities interest upon each other both in economic and political fields and the material studied will relate specifically to two particular parts of the Kachin Hills Area namely Assam and the Sinlum-Bhamo area respectively.

We shall be concerned in these later Chapters with the relations between "Kachins" and Shans". Already in Chapter 2 I have suggested that the normal use of the term Shan is ambiguous and misleading - that the term properly represents a category defined in terms of economic behaviour rather than a specific ethnic or cultural group.

In the present Chapter I shall elaborate that theme and demonstrate that the "symbiosis" between the Shans and their hill neighbours is not peculiar to the Shan-Kachin situation but is paralleled in the relations of Shans and Karens, Shans and Was and so on.



I have urged that the concept of "the tribes of Burma" should be replaced by the concept of a cultural continuum. In this Chapter I try to demonstrate that continuum.

#### The Economic Balance in Hill Areas.

If the argument of Chapter IV is valid it is not merely true that none of the hill areas of today can be treated as economic isolates, but also that scarcely any of them can ever have been isolates in the past.

It may be that in the past there have been primitive societies which were economic isolates and culturally stable. But such stability has not been a characteristic of the hill peoples of Burma and Assam, whatever may have been their ethnical or cultural appearance at different times. These hill people must at all times have had close economic and political relations with their hill neighbours and their neighbours of the plains and must always have been subject to constant cultural development and modification through this interaction.

In so far as these people are "primitive" it is not the backwardness of isolation but simply the cultural expression of a subsistence economy.

Assuming I am correct in saying that many of the hill areas are, in terms of basic food production,

"deficiency areas" then there are only a limited number of ways in which the economy of such areas can be "balanced".

These may be classified as -

- a. The sale of personal services and labour.
- b. The sale of raw material and cash crops.
- c. The use of military force.

Under modern "administered" conditions only (a) and (b) need be considered.

Nowadays in the Kachin Hills the only important items under category (b) are the Jade and Amber of the Kamaing-Maingkwan area and the Palaung tea from Tawngpeng. A century ago cotton production was important throughout the Sinpraw area and was traded to the Chinese through Bhamo and Hsenwi. The short lived rubber trade of the Hukawag Valley has already been mentioned. The blacksmith trades of the Maingtha and Daleng have only local importance. Likewise there is a small pottery industry among the Balu Bung north of Putao. Gold washing is carried on in many areas but does not appear to be very profitable.

Yet despite the meagreness of local natural resources the Kachin Hills under British rule (if we neglect the events since 1942) have been tolerably prosperous.

This prosperity has been achieved by the sale of services, especially to Government in the form of military service and coolie labour for the F.W.D., but also to a lesser extent through agricultural labour in the plains.



In terms of economics the payment of wages to Kachin soldiers (1) and P.W.D. coolies may be regarded as a direct Government subsidy which helps to balance the economy of the hill areas concerned. On this account from the viewpoint of the Burma Government the hills represent a persistent financial liability quite apart from such routine administrative costs as salaries of officials and maintenance of health services. Inevitably therefore, except in time of war, these subsidies are kept to a minimum. The usual balance achieved is at a bare subsistence level; there is no starvation but there is also no overall margin of wealth accruing to the hills which could be converted into capital and which might thus serve to raise the general standard of living. Paradoxically, since the social organisation of the hills is well adapted to a marginal existence, administrators who fail to take effective steps to raise the standard of living can argue with justice that they are preserving the existing social order! Such are the uses of practical anthropology!

But while under British rule, the crucial factor in the economic balance is the sale of personal services, it seems probable that under pre-British conditions the use of

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1. There were Kachins in the Imperial Guard of the old Burmese Army. Scott (1) 493/496. It seems unlikely that the wages of these troops, if any, were of material consequence for the economy of the hills.

military force was often at least equally important. This force was manifested in a variety of ways all of which are well known in the more glamorous cities of the U.S.A. On all trade routes passing through hill areas - and owing to the nature of the country it was impossible for trade caravans to avoid the hills - tolls were levied by those who claimed the right to maintain the roads and "protect" the passers by. When the military strength of the plains people was weak this principle of "protection" was considerably enlarged.

(1)  
Richardson, who visited the Myelat area of the Southern Shan States in 1837 found that the only Shan town not paying "blackmail" to the Karens was Mokmai which was sustaining (2) severe and constant raiding in consequence. Similarly when the British entered Assam in 1825 they found a highly organised (3) system of "blackmail". The dues paid by the plains people to the hillmen were often justified through the convention that they represented a form of rental for land belonging to the hill people but the only sanction for payment was the direct threat of force. Similarly gold washing and fishing in the

1. Richardson (1)
2. Ibid 18 Feb.
3. See Chapter VI.



plains was often taxed by the hillmen on the thesis that the water and the gold came originally from the hills! Similar (1) conditions prevailed around Myitkyina and Bhamo in the 1870 (2) period. Conditions under which the hill people levied regular taxes of this sort on their plains neighbours could seldom have been stable, since they depended upon the political weakness of the people of the plains. Wherever the plains people were politically well organised, the hill people would have had to achieve their economic balance through more peaceful means - namely through trade and the sale of services.

#### Examples of political and Economic 'Flux'

The relations between hills and plains can thus be visualised as two types of unstable tension depending upon whether hills or plains were for the time being militarily dominant. If the plains were dominant, the hill people must depend upon the tolls on trade routes, the sale of cash crops and the sale of services; but if the hills were dominant direct taxation in the form of "blackmail" or protection money was of primary importance. It follows that

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1. Hamilton (1) 32. Kawi Ma Nawng (1) 48.

2. Williams (1); Strettell (1). See also Chapter VII.

in any social upheaval which served to disrupt the military strength of the plains the hill people would be likely to resort to depredation and raiding - not because such activity was particularly productive in itself but as a means of extorting blackmail.

This explains certain inconsistencies in some of the earlier accounts. (1) Hanney who visited Bhamo and Mogaung in 1835 indicates that on the whole relations between hill people and plains people were amicable and peaceful. A year later there was a revolution which resulted in a change of monarch; (2) in the resulting confusion the hillmen everywhere ravaged the plains.

(3) Bayfield, who duplicated Hanney's route of the year before, and Richardson further south give very similar accounts of the confusion and since these were practically the only fully reported visits to the frontier areas prior to 1868, (4) later writers, especially Scott, have chosen to conclude that a state of semi warfare between hills and

1. Hanney (1)
2. Accession of Tharrawaddy Min.
3. Bayfield (1)
4. The only Europeans to visit the Bhamo Area prior to 1868 seem to have been Hanney 1835, Bayfield 1836, Kincaid 1836, Bishop Bigandet about 1856, Williams 1863. I cannot trace any visit to Hsenwi earlier than 1889. Elias visited Mong Mao in 1875.



plains was endemic. This conclusion is not unnatural since, in the period immediately following the final annexation in 1885, (of which Scott had direct experience,) conditions were again utterly chaotic, and he tended to infer that affairs had always been thus.

Careful reading of Richardson's account shows that the disturbed conditions he experienced were directly connected with the revolution then in progress and that in general the hills and plains had achieved a satisfactory modus vivendi. Richardson's route brought him up through Karen-ai into the Myelat area of the Southern Shan States. In the 80 years since the death of Alaungpaya there had been a great decay in Burmese power and the Burmese were no longer able to police their frontier satisfactorily. The Burmese policy was to keep the power of the individual Shan States as weak as possible and this had the effect of giving a disproportionate weight of authority to the inaccessible Chieftains of the Karen Hills.

The following quotations are from Richardson's journal. The first indicates the economic situation in the Karen Hills area, it is particularly valuable as emphasising (a) the scarcity of rice and (b) the dual economy of taungya and wet paddy.)

- N. 91 - Although this is a Karen scene the general topography  
 - and economy is closely similar to that of almost any  
 - part of the Kachin Hills Area south of Myitkyina. The



✓ The soil is of tolerable fertility in the hills and in the valleys where irrigation can be employed it is good; their taxes paid to their chiefs are exceedingly light; nearly the whole country is high land and the grain raised on the hills is such of course as can be grown without irrigation; the valleys in all that part of the country through which I travelled are so very narrow that though they are cultivated with great care in terraces so far up the side of the hills as their declivities will admit of they bear a very small proportion to the high land .... Cultivation on the hills is almost entirely by hand and performed with considerable care and neatness and the implement universally used is the Chinese hoe; in the valleys and level table lands the buffalo plough is used. Rice is scarce and dear (we paid at one place Rs 2/- per basket and could not get as much as we wanted at that price the cheapest we got was 12 As); oholum was more plentiful; ..... the services of the people due to the Chiefs seem almost voluntary.....slaves are so common amongst them that hired labour is nearly unknown...<sup>1</sup>

Richardson labels the population Karean (i.e. Karen) but culturally speaking it was a mixed group<sup>2</sup>. Further north in the Myelat area Richardson noted

"Many of the people of this district have voluntarily gone to reside in the Karean territory..... to avoid the grinding oppression of the Burman Government."<sup>3</sup>

The type of modus vivendi that had been reached between these Karens and their Shan and Burman neighbours is indicated by the following.<sup>4</sup>

"Kundoo..... contains in all about 60 or 80 houses; it has a small decayed stockade within which are 40 of the houses; the rest of the village is outside; it has a small bazaar and weekly market (Tuesdays) when

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1. Richardson (1) February 14th.
  2. Scott described the population of this part of Karen-ni as "The population is mainly Red Karen but there are many Burmans and Shans, the former engaged in the timber trade, the latter in agriculture. Scott (111), 492.
  3. Richardson (1), April 20th.
  4. Ibid. February 14th.



the people from the surrounding villages come in for betel nut, ngapie, salt, etc., etc., making their small payments by barter for rice; it is situated in a small uneven valley; the ground immediately in the neighbourhood south east of the town is level and laid out in rice fields, irrigated by a small beauty mountain stream and on the low hills in the valley the whole extent of which may be 10 to 15 miles by 16 or 20, is cultivated the hill rice. It is still the burman frontier town though from the inability of that government to protect them they have been obliged to pay blackmail to the Karean-nee chiefs during the time of the present theeghee and his father, before which the Kareans used to carry off the labourers in the fields close to the stockade, (the sum paid to the Kareans is about 500 tickals coarse silver per annum)....

The fact that the stockade was decayed and that half of the village was outside it indicates that the arrangement was satisfactory to all concerned. Kundoo from its description was similar to almost any of the Shan settlements to be found along the river valleys and in the foothills northward of Bhamo and there can be little doubt that the usual relation of these people with their Kachin neighbours was very similar.<sup>1</sup> Scotts account is prejudiced by the fact that he had to justify the drastic punitive action taken by the British against the Kachin "oppressors" of the "wretched Shan-Burmans."

"The Burmans and Shans stood in great awe of the Kachins for some years before the annexation....The Shan traders were the victims of excessive blackmail which the Kachins levied on all who passed through their territory. Above Bhamo no village, Burman or Shan, could exist without putting itself under the protection of some chieftain in the adjacent hills. The Kachin duwa or chief came down at irregular intervals and levied tribute ranging from a demand for several buffaloes to a few handfulls of salt. The protection granted was somewhat anomalous and usually consisted in negotiating the release, of course on

1. For examples see especially Strettell(1)also Chapter VII below.



payment of large sums by the wretched Shan Burmans of slaves captured from their village by other Kachins. Sometimes the protecting chief made a retaliatory raid on the duwa who had interfered with his clients but more often he attacked a village of Shan Burmans tributary to the offending village."<sup>1</sup>

Actually there is plenty of evidence that the Kachin Chiefs took their obligations as "protectors" very seriously. One of the most costly of the early British punitive expeditions was brought about by the fact that the British chose to protect from reprisals a Kachin Chief who had dared to interfere with the Shan proteges of another.<sup>2</sup> Anyway the very considerable Shan Burman population existing north of Bhamo in 1884 is itself evidence that, major political upheavals apart, the arrangements were reasonable satisfactory.

But to return to Richardson and his Karens. Conditions in 1837 were particularly interesting because the decay of Burmese authority was only then taking effect and the transition from a plains-dominant to a hills-dominant organisation was still actually in progress

"The southernmost principality (i.e. Myelat Shan State) is Mobie' about half a day's march from Gnoedaun, now in the country of the Karens-nee by whom the Shans have been so plundered that the Tsohoa does not at present possess any territory beyond the walls of his town which has been so harrassed for some years by the Karens, by whom

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1. Scott (vi) Vol.1. Pt.1. 332
  2. R.N.E.F. (1891) 9. (1893/4) 9.
  3. Mobie - Mong Fai.



it is surrounded without any protection or assistance from Ava that the Tsoboa has at last transferred his allegiance to them.....all the large villages in the principality pay a sort of blackmail to them more or less heavy according to their size and accessibility to their inroad; even in the most unfavourable situations however it bears no proportion to the grinding exactions of the Burmans. The capital of the principality (Mokmai) has not yet consented to an annual payment though it is probable from the constant alarm, and by no means groundless, in which they live that they will be obliged to do so; in the meantime the Isoboe has this year sent Phapho (the Karen Chief) a present of 500 tickals."<sup>1</sup>

and again

"As Mokmai is the only town on the frontier which does not pay blackmail they have to stand the principal brunt of their inroads."<sup>2</sup>

A "war of nerves" such as is here indicated, carried on in order to induce the weaker party to pay protection money, is quite a different matter to the plunder, arson and dacoity of unorganised robber bands. Richardson encountered plenty of the latter, but significantly only after he had left the Shan plateau and entered the Burma plains.<sup>3</sup> And he makes it quite clear that this latter form of banditry was directly associated with the revolution then in progress.

Obviously anyone who pays a tax whether it be to the official Government or to some interloping highland chief tends to grumble about extortion, and naturally too any central government whether it be British or Burmese endeavours to

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- |               |                |
|---------------|----------------|
| 1. Richardson | 21st March     |
| 2.       "    | 18th February. |
| 3.       "    | 24th May.      |

claim the exclusive right to extort protection money, but that does not imply that the protection afforded by highland chiefs is necessarily ineffective. In point of fact, in Richardson's time, the area under Karen protection appears to have been considerably more peaceful and prosperous than that controlled by the Government of Ava.

The point however that I would stress here is the economic one; - where the hill group is politically dominant, the levy of protection money from the plains serves to balance the economy, if they are deprived of this resource then the hill people must seek some other source of income, and if they do not find it the consequence must be raiding for direct plunder, and a vicious circle of further reprisals and repression. The British Administration pride themselves on the fact that whereas formerly the peaceful plainmen had to pay blackmail to the hill bandits, these hill bandits have now been so civilised that they form the core of the Burma army. Economically however the pay of the troops is the equivalent to the ancient blackmail.

### The Mechanism of "Cultural Flux."

Clearly the somewhat critical political and economic balance here described is favourable to what I have described as a state of cultural flux. Historically so far as can be judged neither the Burmese Kings nor any of the Shan Princes have ever achieved full political control over the hills.



Until the advent of the British the various hill areas in practice, even if not in theory, always maintained a considerable degree of political independence, though the degree and regional extent of that independence varied greatly from time to time. Now no-one cares to live on an undemarcated political frontier; it is bad enough to have to pay taxes at all, but it is worse to pay twice over; and the ebb and flow of political suzerainty must certainly have operated in favour of the movement of border populations. Thus in Richardson's time on the Kavenni-Mongpai border there had clearly been a flow from North to South both by way of voluntary migration and through the operation of slavery. On the other hand in times when the plains were politically dominant the necessity for the hill groups to acquire resources through the sale of services would enforce the settlement of a labouring population in the plains, some part of which at least would be permanent.

The dimensions of the moving group would depend upon circumstances. From my analysis of the modal type of Kachin village organisation it can be seen that the most likely kind of grouping to break away through fission is, in structure, a small scale version of the village itself. Not only does the core lineage have its satellites, but the satellite lineages also have their appendages which are in effect embryo lineages. Wherever fission occurs the two parts remain structurally similar. Even if the fragmenting element is only a single household the tendency to establish legal ties of affinal

kinship will quickly recreate the original pattern. In the few instances where the literature reports concrete cases of groups of one culture converting themselves into another the unit of conversion is a village (Bur. ~~xxx~~). This seems the most likely norm.

On the other hand the cultural transfer of individuals as opposed to households and groups of households is certainly common. Throughout Burma both in the hills and in the plains "bond slavery" was formerly extremely common. Individuals were mortgaged, either by themselves or by their parents, as security for loans. When such transactions took place across a cultural frontier failure to redeem the debt would provide an obvious mechanism for the conversion of individuals from one cultural allegiance to another.

The pattern already described for the Kachins had in this respect a wide application. Sangermano<sup>1</sup> wrote thus of the Burmese in the 1780s.

It may be put down among the good qualities of the people (the Burmese) that they consider all men equal in condition .....The Pariahs of the caste looked upon as the vilest in India, or from the coast of Coromandel, or the Caffres, and negroes of Guinea, who are regarded and treated by Europeans as little better than beasts, may come into their confines, and the Burmese will receive them with the same respect as the natives of the most favoured country, and will have no scruple of transacting business, or even of eating with them.

The slaves are for the same reason, treated as children and as forming part of the family of their masters; indeed

1. Sangermano (1), 156.



it is not a rare thing for them to become the sons-in-law of their master. But it must be remembered that slavery was not for life in these parts. If a man can save sufficient to pay the debt for which he was enslaved he becomes free. It often happens that a man will sell his children or his wife or even himself, to pay the taxes and imposts; though these transactions should be looked upon rather as pledges than sales, as the slavery thus entered into is never perpetual.

Such transactions at the commoner level had their counterpart in the marital arrangements of royalty. Scott notes that

Every Shan Chief had to send daughters of his house to the King. If one of these girls was promoted to the rank of one of the four queens or was even a favourite minor queen her father or brother was correspondingly favoured on audience days while a perhaps more powerful chief was passed over because his womenfolk were only maids of honour.<sup>1</sup>

A similar system accounts for the huge harems of the leading Shan Sawbwas. The chiefs of the Shan substates (Mong), who ranked as htamong and heng, held posts which were hereditary yet subject to the overriding approval of the Sawbwa. To maintain their position these mang chiefs had to provide womenfolk for the Sawbwas haw. In a state such as North Hsenwi many of the leading mang chiefs (Kachin; mung duwa) were Kachins and Palaungs<sup>2</sup> so that the haw had an international flavour. As Scott puts it<sup>3</sup>

For years it has been the fashion for the Sawbwas to have Chinese, Burmese, Karen, and Kachin wives sometimes captured, sometimes bought, sometimes received as

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1. Scott (vi) Part 1. Vol. 1. 289.

2. See Richardson, 21st March.

3. Scott, op cit, 478.



presents. Occasionally the issue of such unions succeeded to the State with the result that often a Sawbwa is in appearance of a different race from the bulk of his subjects.

Similarly of course the various Hong chiefs tended to exchange women among themselves. I think I am correct in saying that the three Kachin Chiefs in North Hsenwi with the largest territorial jurisdictions all have either Shan mothers or Shan wives or both. Two of them are, according to the local Kachins, sau tai sai (become Shans) and the third, whom I met in 1941, dressed himself as a Europeanised Shan gentleman and professed that he hardly ever spoke Jinghpaw. Similar is the case of the formerly very influential Kansai Sinwa Nawng, chief of the leading Jade mines area west of Kamsing. The Chief himself was the son of a Shan woman; of several wives at least two were Shan; and one of his sons is married to a Shan. Whether after such an intermixture the final progeny are "racially" Kachin or Shan is for other experts to decide!

#### Shan and Wa in Kentung<sup>9</sup>

These instances demonstrate that a number of institutional arrangements exist which must confuse the presumed distinct categories "Shan" and "Hill man."

Let us examine such a pair of categories in more detail

Two of the groups classed by the linguists as true Tai<sup>of</sup> are the Mkun and Lu and Kengtung and Kenghung. The following passage from Scott is an indication of the difficulties that a



practical observer may encounter when he attempts to apply such a classification to the situation on the ground.

"The Hkun and Lu of Kengtung and Kenghung....In dialect and written character they are nearer to the Lao than the Tai west of the Salween but unlike the Lao they have been very little if at all affected by Khmer or Cambodian influence either directly or through the Siamese. The traces left by Burmese supremacy are very slight. The Chinese have affected them just as little. The Hkun far from being the inhabitants of the whole great state of Kengtung seem to be merely the inhabitants of the large plain in which the capital is situated. The rest of the Tai population calls itself Lu. The Hkun dialect appears to have been a good deal influenced by Lawa or Wa who were at one time the owners of the whole country down to Chiengmai. The Hkun may therefore be looked upon as a branch of the Lu.....Yet (the Lu) disown all connection with the Tai as they call the people west of the Salween and with the Tai Hke (Chinese Shans) many of whom are settled among them, live in distinct villages and also disown all relationship. It is precisely these intermediate groups as Dr. Cushing calls them who insist most firmly on their local names of Lu, Hkun, and Lem and apply the name Tai only to those of the race whom we know to have been most affected by the Burmese. The Lem.....are undoubtedly fugitives or emigrants from the Nam Mao (Shweli) region. There is also not a little confusion caused by the fact that some considerable Lao settlements have been made in their midst and retain in their religious books the Lao or Siamese character..... It is precisely because the Tai (i.e., the Hkun, Lu and Lem) are intermediate or rather central, removed from Chinese, Cambodian, and Burman influence that they might be expected to retain the original race name. It is characteristic of the puzzle that they disown it most stoutly."

It is much simpler however if the idea of a Tai race be forgotten. There are very strong local traditions that the Wa once ruled over most of the Kengtung area; Scott concludes that they were driven into the hills by the Shans and relapsed into savagery, acquiring an elaborate headhunting culture in the process! However this may be, there has certainly from time to time been considerable Wa infiltration into the plains.



McCleod who first recorded the story about former Wa dominance in 1837, found several Wa villages in the Vicinity of Chiengmai; Davies, a much later but quite independent witness, "found the inhabitants of a very civilised village near Meng Meng (a Chinese Shan State) far away from the headhunters described as Wa"<sup>1</sup>. Then there is the interesting group in Kengtung (11,369 in 1931) known as Tai Loi a phrase merely meaning hill shan. According to both Scott and Telford<sup>2</sup> this same group are also known as the Mut Wa, or left behind Wa. As a census classification it includes a number of small groups listed by Scott as En, Sawm, Ang-ku, Pyin, Amok etc., all are either Buddhist or in process of becoming Buddhist. Scott states the position thus (as at 1906)

Most of these clans have undoubted Wa affinities and some show strong connecting links with the Humai (i.e., Palaung) on the one hand and the Hkamuk on the other. They unite however in denying that they are Wa, and profess not to be able to understand Wa, which in some cases is obviously absurd. The Tai Loi like the Humai are by way of being fervent Buddhists. The Pyin and Keem are usually Buddhists; and so also are the En who very often have monasteries but without resident monks. Perhaps it would be more correct to say that these last three clans are becoming Buddhists as are also some of the Angku....

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1. Scot (vi) Vol.1. Pt.1. 494.
  2. Scott (ii), 136.  
Bennison (i) para 115.  
Telford (i) 89.



Even among those whom he classes as true Wa Scott recognises a number of distinctions based seemingly not so much upon any marked cultural or political distinction, as upon a vague "degree of savagery."

"The headhunting Wa, the Wa Lon or Wa Pwi, as they are called, form the nucleus. The area of their territory is undetermined but is probably not less than 20 miles from east to west and 50 from north to south. Round them come the settlements of the Intermediate Wa, communities which have fits of headhunting, take heads when they come their way use the skulls or criminals or buy skulls. The outer fringe are the Tame Wa who have no skull avenues at all...." (1)

It seems fairly clear that these distinctions are arbitrary devices of the ethnographer rather than anything intrinsic to the material on the ground.

The implication seems to be therefore that between true Wa at one extreme and true Tai at the other there is a continuous gradation. Even the linguistic test which has been made the grand criterion by those who would atomise the total social field into innumerable tribes and races serves to support my contention of a continuum.

The people whom Scott describes above as Tame Wa are known locally as La Wa or La, though they actually call themselves Wu or Vu. These people live in the hills while their immediate neighbours in the valley bottoms are people whom the ethnographers assert are Shans (Tai), but who in fact call themselves Lu and who deny that they are Tai!



Admittedly it is quite impossible to sort out in detail all the various influences that have been at work but it seems reasonable to suppose that the groups now known as Hkun and Lu have emerged simply as a consequence of the long term ebb and flow of political influence between hillmen of the inaccessible Wa States and the typical plains culture of the Lao of northern Siam. No question of a Shan or Wa race need come into it..

The same general argument can be applied to all the various "tribes" lying North, East and West of the core of territory which Scott has named as the territory of the "headhunting Wa." To the North the rice valleys are few and the grading off is towards the vague category "Yunnanese" rather than towards Shans, but both to the east and west WAs "turn into" Shans. Pitchford<sup>1</sup> and Telford<sup>(2)</sup> supply excellent supporting evidence to Scott on the Burma side and for the Indo-China side two articles by Bourlet<sup>3</sup> can be consulted. The latter who is writing about "Lao" and "Thay" is in fact describing a semi hill people whose general organisation and mode of life appears to correspond very closely indeed to the

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1. Pitchford (1)

2. Telford (1)

3. Bourlet (1) and (11). These two papers need to be read in conjunction. Although the first concerns Lao from the Northern Laos, and the second Thay from across the Annam border, Bourlet himself says (1), 526 "ce que nous venons de raconter s'applique surtout aux Thay et aux Laotiens."



pattern I have labelled Kachin in Chapter 3. Telford is principally concerned with Lahu and Kaw in Kengtung whom I would regard as transitional between Wa and <sup>Yunnanese</sup> Shan. He repeatedly stresses the organisational similarity between these people and the Kachins as known to him through the work of Gilhodes. Fitchford gives a mass of evidence to show that despite their headhunting proclivities the Wa are by no means either specially primitive or isolated. Some of them are renowned as traders. He stresses the lack of clear distinction between Tai, Tai Loi and Wa.

Finally we may note that Scott makes the Wa Lon (the headhunting Wa) a distinct central group. But the Shan State lying to the north of Kengtung and south of the Wa States known as Manglon or Mainglin should logically be written Mong Lon ("country of the Lon"). Scott himself tells us that

"The Chief, Sao Ton Hsang, a Sawbwa (by rank), (was) a Wa and a Buddhist.....the portion of the state west of the Salween has a population which is entirely Shan, except for some Lahu, Chinese, Palaung and Yang Lan villages. The bulk of the state east of the river is Wa but there are many Shans and Lahu."<sup>1</sup>

Unnecessary atomism could hardly be carried further.

#### Cultural gradation as an alternative to cultural contrast.

The atomistic view favoured by Scott and his fellow writers and the continuum, which I suggest is a more useful conceptualisation of the situation, are descriptive of the same

1. Scott, (11), 495.

actual facts, yet the sheer number of the allegedly discrete "tribes" is at first sight rather puzzling.

I suggest that we may reduce this to a general principle. The alternatives are to view the total ethnological situation either as a complicated amalgam of contrasted cultures involving a vast number of discontinuities, or as a continuous gradation of infinitely small changes with hill cultures at one extreme and plains cultures at the other. Now if the actuality corresponds to the latter concept, then from the former point of view, in any particular instance, the number of distinct observable culture groups will depend entirely upon the range and intensity of observation.

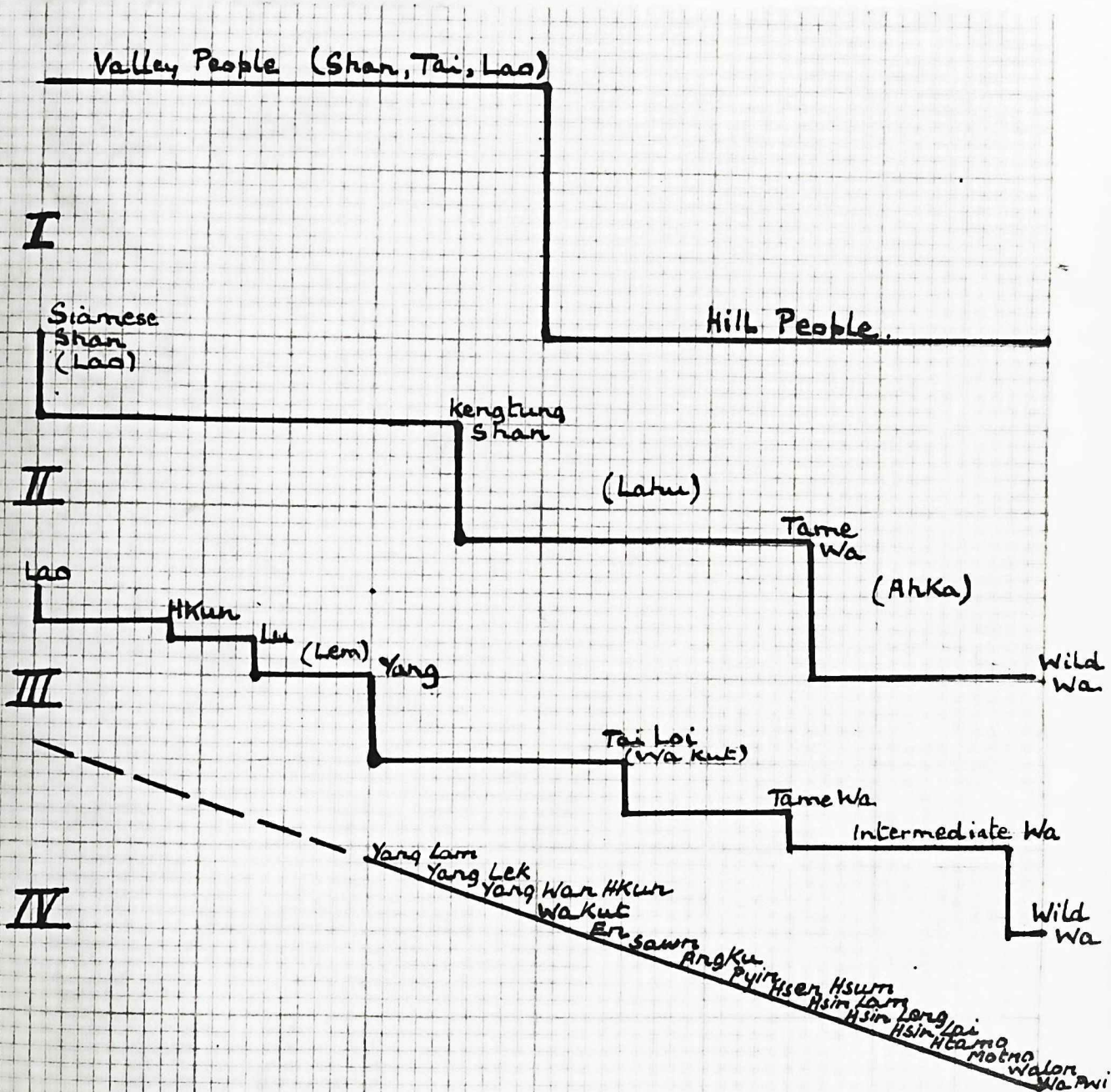
This statement can best be understood by consideration of a Diagram (Diagram V).

Consider for example the Kengtung area described by  
 1. Scott in the passage already quoted. At the crudest level of analysis the whole population can be classed as Shan or Hill Tribe. At a slightly more subtle level the Shan might be broken up into Kengtung Shan and Lao and the Hill Tribes into broad classifications of Wa, Lahu, and Kaw. Further refinement brings in such groups as Lu, Hkun, Lem, Yang, Tai Loi, La and if the analysis is carried still further we have Yang Sek, Yang Wan Hkun, Yang Lam, Ying Kha, Tai Len, En, Wa Kut Sawn and so on. It is simply a matter of choice and of intensity of  
 1. Scott (vi) 1.1. 206.



# Diagram V

Diagram designed to show how increased precision in the descriptive differentiation of the peoples of a particular area (Kengtung-Wa States) reduces cultural contrast to a continuous gradation.



analysis whether you represent the gradation of culture change by a continuous incline or by a series of discontinuous steps.

There is a quotation from Telford which directly illustrates this process of the repeated subdivision of a cultural category in the mind of the ethnographer as his analysis proceeds. The general area in question is the Kengtung - Wa States border discussed above

The Burma Census rates Kwi and Lahu as separate "races" in a "race group" labelled Lolo-Muhso<sup>1</sup>; according to Telford

"The Lahus....are divided into two main tribes called the Lahu Na and the Lahu Shi. According to Government classification the Lahu Shi are designated as Kwi. The Lahu Na however and the Lahu Shi are from the same parent stock and though there are decided differences in their respective dialects each can easily understand the other...Each of the two main Lahu Tribes has several racial subdivisions. The Lahu Na tribes include the Na Fahn, Huli Kulough, La Law, Veya, Laha, Hpu and Kalah. The Lahu Shi include the Kalang, Banceu, Namkyo, Neukeu."<sup>2</sup>

Clearly there is no limit to this sort of thing. As the subdivisions get smaller however the "races" and "tribes" merge down into clans and lineages. Telford himself makes the significant analogy "in a similar way the Kachin race is divided into five parent tribes" - meaning thereby the five du baw clans, Marip, Maran, Lahtaw, Lahpai, N'Khun. At this level, as I have clearly demonstrated in the case of the Kachins

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1. Bennison (1)  
c.f. also Harvey (11) where Giwe =Kwi.
  2. Telford (1), 90.



there need be no coincidence between cultural frontiers and clan labels.

To those who are already familiar with the view that cultures need not be considered as discrete and discontinuous it may be that I am labouring this point unduly. My defence is simply that one of the most eminent of American anthropologists has within the last few years written of Siam in the following terms

"The mountain and forest peoples are non-Thai and have been little integrated into Thailand's economy. They are simple tribes living in small groups and subsisting largely on hunting and food collecting; they are also primitive agriculturalists. The mountain tribes generally use only the hoe and the planting stick. The plains people living at an elevation below 3000 feet are Lao Thai an incorrigible low land people who raise their omnipresent rice on the inundated surfaces of the valleys and plains. They use the simple plow etc..."

It seems to me time that this sort of dogmatism was exploded once for all.

Far from anyone being "incorrigibly" Thai or "incorrigibly" mountain tribesman my view is that in fact in all fringe situations structural elements of population (individuals, lineage groups, small local settlements) habitually tend transfer their "cultural allegiance" from one side to the other in response to varying economic and political pressures.

A number of examples of such transfer have already been

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1. Benedict (1), 2.



given but it must be stressed again that these are not freak exceptions to the stable norm but reflections of a general principle of social mechanism.

The interlinkages between culture groups are multi-directional. If culture B establishes a particular kind of interchange relationship with culture A on one side; it will probably establish just the same sort of relationship with culture C on another.

In an earlier Chapter we noted that the Lisu (Yawyin) living among the Jinghpaw of the Burma China border had, by the device of identifying Jinghpaw lineage names with their own, in effect adopted themselves into the Kachin political system by giving themselves a status in the general network of kinship. With this in mind the following passage by Fraser, a missionary who worked among the Lisu on the Chinese side of the border is very striking.

"There are many Lisu who have Chinese surnames and claim Chinese origin. Though all Lisu clan surnames have their Chinese equivalents some have Chinese surnames without Lisu equivalents these are usually descendants of Chinese adopted into Lisu families. But even Lisu with ordinary clan names will sometimes claim to be of Chinese extraction, averring that their ancestors came from Eastern China..... Such Lisu however do not boast of their Chinese origin. No Lisu is ashamed of his own race whereas the aborigines of Eastern Yunnan where Chinese influence is stronger are often ashamed to admit that they are not Chinese and indeed tend to become absorbed in the latter race. In the Tengyueh district however there is a saying that the Chinese sometimes turn into "tribespeople" but that the tribespeople never "turn into" Chinese."



There is no doubt at all in my own mind that similar processes are at work throughout the whole area we are considering. The fact that a flux of this kind has not often been reported is no evidence for its non existence.

The following example from the other side of Burma (Lower Chindwin) demonstrates cultural interchange not between hillmen and Shans but between Shans and Burmese. It brings out the important point that the opposition necessarily implicit in a situation of cultural contrast may disappear under cultural fusion and actually come to be used as a ritual expression of the new unity.

"At Pyanhlegyi....once every three years a curious sham fight is staged between the villagers of Shan-ywa, a village on the opposite bank of the Yama, and those of Pyanhlegyi. The latter are supposed to defend the nat (i.e., Taungu Bayin the guardian nat of Pyanhlegyi), and it is arranged that they are always defeated. If any of the Shan-ywa men are able to snatch the Taungdaw tuban (sic. turban?) off the nat's image, or the image itself, the nattain has to redeem them for five rupees each. I have not seen this display and can give no explanation of it. The inhabitants of the other village were formerly Shans, though they are now indistinguishable from Burmans. Possibly they once raided Pyanhle and carried off or tried to carry off, the statue of the Taungu Bayin."

#### Cultural Flux in complex situations.

In the argument and examples so far put forward the concept of a cultural flux or cultural gradation has been considered in its simplest possible form; that is to say the



intermediate or transitional culture groups have been considered simply as the product of the interaction of two major groups. Thus in the previous Chapter the Atsi and Gauri were represented as the product of interaction between two major hill groups, the Maru and Jinghpaw, while in the present Chapter the numerous groups in Kengtung have been represented as a more or less simple interaction between Wa and Lao (Shan). But while a two dimensional picture of this sort is useful for the purposes of demonstrating the principle involved, it must be understood that in many practical instances there may be more than two major political influences to be considered. The diagram of the Kengtung situation for example is oversimplified by the omission of Chinese and Burmese influences.

As an example of the sort of situation that develops in a "three dimensional" fringe area, the Myelat States which occur at the junction of Karen-land, the Southern Shan States and Burma are worth considering. This is the area visited by Richardson in 1837, whose journal has been quoted several times already in this Chapter.

The 1931 Census classifies most of the inhabitants of the Myelat as either belonging to the "Burma Group" or races or as Taungthu, who are classed as Karen. The exact population of the Myelat is not separately stated but in the whole of the Southern Shan States there were 143,274 of the Burma Group



and 153,956 Taungthu. The Burma Group is subdivided into Burmese 7,985; Danu 57,782; Intha 55,218; Taungyo 22,250; others 38. There are another 16,602 Danu recorded from the Northern Shan States on the borders of Halpaw State and Mandalay but otherwise almost the whole of the three groups listed as Danu, Intha and Taungyo come from the Myelat-Yawnghwe area.

According to Scott<sup>1</sup> all three groups speak bastard dialects of Burmese with a strong Shan accent. The men all dress as Shans, though the womens' dress among the Taungyo and Danu is similar to that of the Karens of Karenni. There is no evidence that the groups concerned claim the cultural unity which outsiders would impose upon them. Intha is simply Burmese for "sons of the Lake" and is applied to that part of the population living around the shores of the Yawnghwe Lake which speaks a dialect or dialects of Burmese. Taungthu is Burmese for "Hill man". Scott remarks that they "are all but certainly Karen....but they do not admit it."<sup>2</sup> Taungyo<sup>3</sup> is as like as not a corruption of the same word.

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1. Scott(11) 69/70.

2. Ibid, 129.

3. The Census rates taungthu, taungtha, yaw, taungyo as separate groups though taungthu and taungyo are intermingled on the ground. In translation taung = hill, thu, tha = man; yaw, yo probably derives from yau 'the numerative of man (e.g., lu te yau 'one man). The Burmese use all these terms vaguely as in the case of khyan, kevin, kakhyen discussed on Chapter 2.



Naturally enough the Burmese have classified a number of "slightly foreign" groups by labels of this sort which gives the Census authorities the opportunity for learned discrimination. "The Taungye dialect resembles Burmese but although they have become isolated they have managed to survive. They must not be confused with the Taungthas (in the Karen group) or the Taungthas (in the Kuki Chin group)"<sup>(1)</sup>

However that may be, all the people of the Myelat are nominally Buddhist; politically they are organised into small Shan States the composition of which cuts across the supposed ethnic divisions; culturally and economically they are a composite of Karen and Shan, - that is to say those who live in the wet rice valleys might readily be mistaken for Shans, those who live in the uplands working taungya might readily be taken for Karens. And indeed why not. Why should they not be both? Just as the Palaungs of Tawngpeng, from a political aspect, can be regarded as Shans, but from certain other aspects of cultural organisation are close kin to the Kachins, so these people of the Myelat are petty Shan or petty Karen or even petty Burmen according to choice.

Nor is this state of affairs at all exceptional. All the Shan States are culturally speaking composites between hill groups and plains groups; and though the political power

(1) Bennison (i)



in the major instances rests with families whom we assert are Shan, this is not always the case. The ruling family in Kengtung are Hkun, whom, as we have seen, deny that they are Tai(Shan) but have some Wa affiliations; in Hsenwi, before the annexation,<sup>1</sup> the Sawbwa, though a Shan, was a puppet of the Kachins, and his most powerful subordinate the Heng of Kokang - who was virtually a Sawbwa on his own - was a Chinese. Where the smaller states are concerned neither the population nor the rulers make any claim to be Shan. Scott lists 44 States within the Shan States area and of these no less than 17 have non-Shan rulers.

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1. The former state of Hsenwi was broken up after the annexation. One Hengship was broken off to form South Hsenwi, the Kachin area was put under direct European control, the Heng of Kokang was given the status of Myosa and became more independent than ever.

Table of Compositions of Small Shan States with Non-Shan Rulers (as at 1901)

State Name	Population.	Tribal (linguistic) Composition	Tribe of Chief.
+ Hsawongkham	12561	Danu, Taungthu, Taungyo Shan	Danu
+ Kyawkyo	4771	Danu, Taungthu, Taungyo	Danu
+ Kyong	2340	Danu, Deye	Danu
+ Loi-ai	5442	Taungthu	Taungthu
+ Loi-long	30731	Karen (Eghai), Taungthu	Karen
+ Loi-maw	4576	Taungthu	Taungthu
+ Maw	7743	Burmese, Danu	Danu
+ Mawson	3557	Danu, Taungthu, Taungyo	Danu
+ Namhkai	6780	Taungthu	Taungthu
+ Pangmi	3456	Danu, Taungthu, Taungyo	Danu
+ Pwela	7866	Danu, Taungthu, Taungyo	Taungthu
+ Pangtare	15014	Danu, Taungthu, Taungyo	Danu
+ Yengan	9998	?	Danu
Hopong	11140	Shan, Taungthu	Taungthu
Hsatung	10584	Taungthu, Shan	Taungthu
Tawngpeng	22681	Palaung, Shan, Kachin	Palaung
Wanglon	640,000	Shan, Lahu, Palaung, Wa	Wa

All these chiefs without exception profess to be Buddhist by religion.

States marked + are in the Myelat. The three remaining states in this area have Shan chief namely:

Kawngwe (93,339), Mawng (3,755); Nam Tek (778).



The paradox of having non-Shan Shan States arises

simply because the word Shan is currently used in two different senses. In the phrase Shan States it describes a group of neighbouring states with similar political and economic structure if the population of these states are taken to be Shans, then the term Shan must be stretched to include all such "cultural miscellanea" as Taungtha, Dana, Tailoi, Palaong and so forth. If however the extent of the Shan group be narrowed down, by the Biblical device of shibboleth, until it includes only the wet paddy cultivators of the valleys, then we must avoid presuming that members of this narrow group are always politically dominant. As we have seen the economic advantage does as a rule rest with the wet rice cultivators and the larger States are almost necessarily organised round a nucleus area of wet paddy cultivation; but in the smaller political aggregates members of other groups can and do assume the leading role.

The general type of the political structure is the same in every case. It is notable too that whatever their supposed "racial" affiliations the Chiefs of these States great or small are formal Buddhists and are known by names and titles which are indistinguishable. Note for example the names of the following Sawbwas as given by Scott:

<u>State</u>	<u>Sawbwas Name</u>	<u>"Race"</u>
N. Nsenwi	Mkun Hsang Ton Hung	Shan
Tawngpeng	Mkun Hsang	Palaung
Manglon	Sao Ton Hsang	Wa
Kengtung	Sao Mkun Kiao Intaleng	Mkun-Shan
Kehsi Mansam	Mkun Hsang	Shan
Loimaw	Mkun Kyaw	Taungthu
Loilong	Mkun Mhan Chok	Karen

As against this series in which all the names might be described as "typically Shan", we have a selection in the Myelat border country which are "typically Burman."

Yawnghwe	Sir Saw Maung <sup>1</sup>	Shan
Msaungthakan	Maung Po	Danu <sup>2</sup>
Lei Ai	Maung Po Kin	Taungthu.

The principles involved are reasonably clear and may be categorised as follows.

(1) So far as obvious cultural features are concerned e.g., Language, Dress, House Type - the transitional groups in border areas possess at any given time a more or less random set of characteristics borrowed from their neighbours on all sides. The varying proportions in which these obvious characteristics appear in different localities lead to the fiction of diverse "races", and "tribes."

(11) So far as economic features are concerned the number of basic variants throughout the whole area of our study is very limited. By far the most important types are (a) organisations based on jungle taungya cultivation and

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1. Saw Maung might also be Karen.
  2. All the Chiefs whom Scott classes as Danu have Burmese style names.



(b) organisations based on wet paddy cultivation. All such variations as grassland taungya, hill terraces, and so on are but modifications or combinations of these two basic types which represent, as typical modes, the economy of the jungle hillmen and the economy of the "Shan" plainsmen.

(111) So far as political features are concerned we have to consider not so much a number of contrasted types but a continuous gradation of political organisations of different scale. The underlying principles of segmentary organisation are much the same in all these "States" whatever their size, and these principles have already been discussed at some length in a previous Chapter. There is however this contrast. Owing to the limitations of the hill economy the political states of the hill areas are limited as to size of population. Political confederations in the hills may cover large areas but they cannot compare in size of population to the States based upon a plains economy. For this reason the political groupings in the hills are less complex in structure than the larger groupings in the plains. the political structure of the hill "states" and of the smaller plains states is of a simple segmentary order such as has been described; but in the larger plains states, such as Hsenwi, Kengtung, Old Mogaung, and the Burmese Kingdom, although the basic segmentary structure persists and runs right through from top to bottom of the hierarchy, yet there is a further hierarchy, or hierarchies, independent of the strict feudal order which serves as a

cohesive force, counteracting the tendency to fission that appears in any segmentary society when the numbers of population become large.

We will return in a moment to consider the nature of this cohesive organisation in the larger states. First I need to give a general tabulation of my argument which represents most of the so-called "races" of Burma as mere stages of transition between Hills and Plains.

Diagram of transitional groups (Diagram VI)

In quoting detailed evidence I have dealt only with the interaction of Jinghpaw and Maru, Lolo and Wa, Shan-Burman and Karen, but the principle involved is general. All neighbouring groups interact persistently upon one another and in the process form and reform a shifting complex of minor groups which enthusiastic Census experts can discover as the remnants of antediluvian "races". The argument in its general form and applied to the Assam Burma area as a whole may be represented by a diagram.

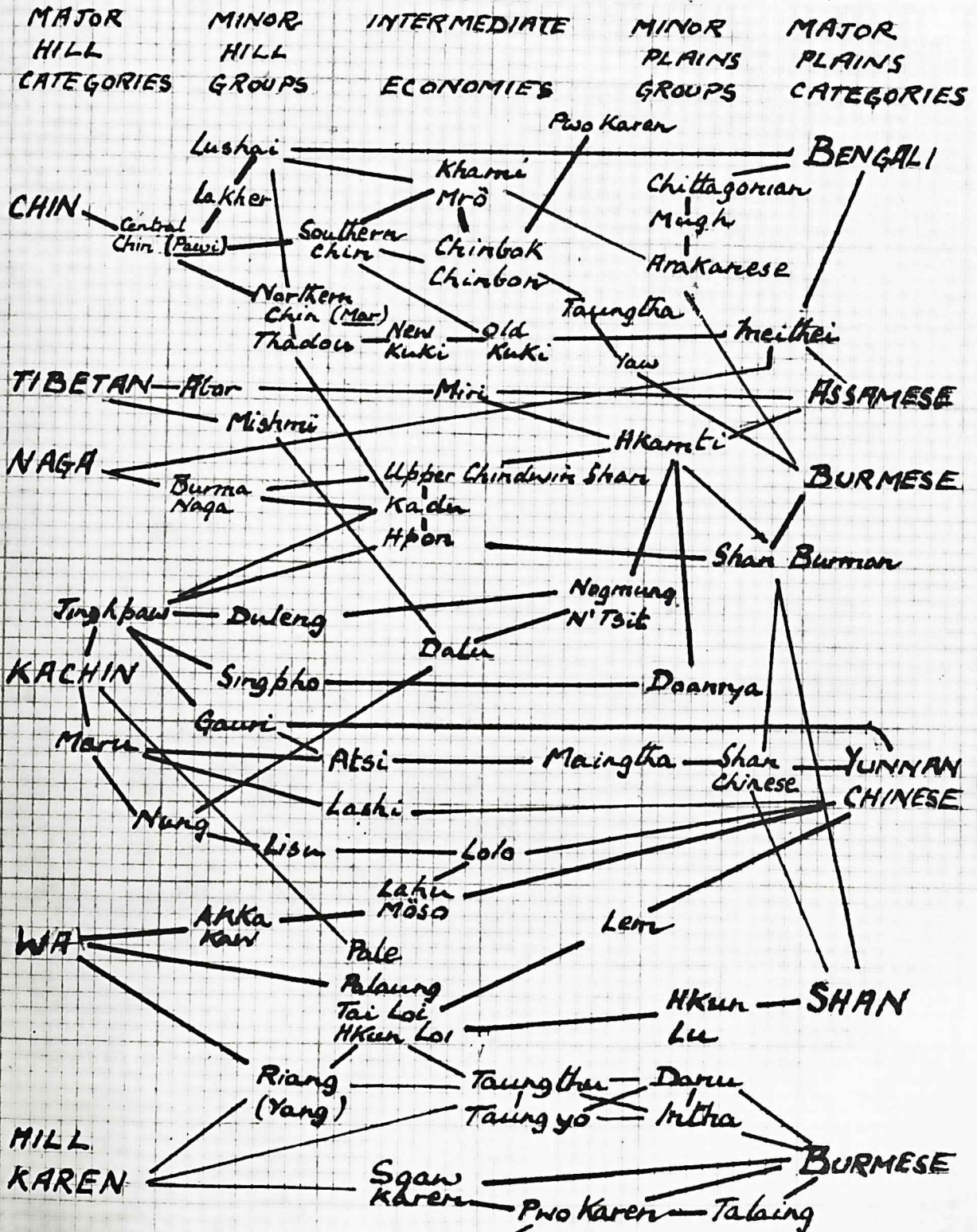
No special originality is claimed for this arrangement, most of it is derived from information given by Scott, but it has I suggest considerable advantages over the more usual classification by "race" groups." In my diagram any two groups joined by straight lines are either intermingled with each other on the ground or else territorially adjacent; and, in addition, in every case, both groups share one or



# DIAGRAM VI

The principal so-called "races" of Burma and eastern Assam shown as culturally transitional groups intermediate between arbitrarily selected major cultural categories.

Note:- The Kachin sub-groups are given in greater detail than those for other areas.





more important cultural characteristics of an obvious sort such as language type, dress, type of habitation, general economy etc., etc. The groups thus described are not "races" or "Societies" or even "cultures" in an anthropological sense; they are in no sense self contained; they merely represent a group of people sufficiently similar in general cultural characteristics for an outsider to be able to presume that they are one group in contrast to some other. Similarly the major categories shown in capital letters in the right and left hand columns BURMESE, SHAN, CHIN, NAGA etc are also not races or uniform cultures but categories of population having certain general similarities of economic and political organisation.

The groupings, large and small, represented by these various labels do not, I argue, remain stable entities over the course of generations. Not only do individuals die to be replaced by their descendants but whole families or lineages from one group may transfer into another. This process is normally continuous and is the symptom of what I have called cultural flux between hills and plains or between one hill area and another. Unless the hills are artificially subsidised it is a necessary symptom because large areas of the hill country cannot be self supporting and must balance their economy by the sale of labour or military extortion either of which activities will lead to a flow of population across



the cultural frontier. If however the hills are subsidized to the extent that the threat of starvation is permanently removed the necessity for this steady flux of population is largely removed, and in that case the intermediate culture groups will appear to die out since they will become absorbed into the major economies of either side. This in turn has political implications. If the hills are subsidised either directly or indirectly and thus made economically independent of the plains the cultural contrast between plains organisation and hill organisation will become exaggerated through the disappearance of intermediate economies, a consciousness of "racial" or "national" difference may then arise in the population at each extreme. This is in fact the situation that seems to be arising in Burma at the present time, and it is a situation which tends towards ever increasing exaggeration. The British with their well meaning devotion to the cause of minorities often fail to realise that the minorities are in point of fact largely a product of British altruism!

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1. Four minority "nationalisms" appear to be emerging at present Karen, Chin, Kachin, Shan.

### The structure of plains communities

I have argued that, in response to pressures of various kinds, elements of hill societies may change their cultural affiliations and become elements of plains societies. This proposition raises two important problems. What type of structural reorientation is involved at the level of the local village community? How are such transitional groups incorporated into the larger political system of the plains states?

To take the latter point first. All the societies and states we are considering, great or small, from the Kingdom of Burma down to the isolated hill village community may be diagrammatically represented as possessing a pyramid structure of political authority, with the difference that in the large societies the number of stages from the top of the pyramid down to the bottom is much greater than in the smaller societies.

If one were to believe the ethnography<sup>1</sup> there are

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1. e.g. Hodson.

"A Kabui owes no duty to the tribe...he enjoys no rights as a member of the tribe; it affords him no protection against an enemy, for as often as not his worst enemies are those of his own village or tribe. He acknowledges no tribal head either in matters of religion or in secular affairs."

Smith (1) 52.

"Among the Acs there is no tribal organisation of any kind..."

"The Ao villages are very democratic and one man is as good as another" etc., etc. Actually even Smith's account makes it perfectly clear that the Ao have an elaborate social structure which links lineages with the land through the medium of ritual along the lines I have indicated.



some societies where there is no structure of authority at all above the level of the individual. Personally I find this interpretation of the facts rather improbable but there are certainly a number of groups where the chain of authority goes no higher than the local head of a lineage, and where corporate political action is achieved through federating a number of such lineage heads into some sort of council. The villages of many of the Naga groups - e.g. the Angami and the Ao-, and the Maru villages east of the N'mai, though structurally similar to my "village cluster" have no single chief but a council of lineage representatives.

At the other extreme the Burmese Kingdom in its short lived phases of integration was a most elaborate - though unstable - structure with an almost completely autocratic tyrant at the top and a long chain of Viceroys, Provincial Governors, Town Governors, Circle Officers, and Village Headmen below, each possessing, in theory, quite astonishingly autocratic powers over all those within their respective domains.<sup>1</sup>

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1. For description see especially Furnivall (111); Ma Mya Sein (1) Also Carter (11); Scott (1) and Taw Sein Kaw (1).

The old Burmese structure was neither simple, uniform, nor stable. Continuous modifications were being introduced from 1750 onwards which is the only period which concerns us. At a crude level of analysis the hierarchy in most areas was

- Provincial Governor (myo-nun) - appointed
- + Township Officer (myo-ok) - appointed
- + Township chief (myothugyi) - hereditary
- + Circle headmen (gaing or taik-thugyi) - hereditary
- Village headman (yuathugyi) - hereditary
- Ward headmen (gaung tanggaung - ) - hereditary

Of these the grades myo-ok, myothugyi and taikthugyi were



In between these extreme types were the various "states", Shan, Mithai, Arakanese, Talaiing or otherwise, sometimes independent, sometimes forming a part of the Burman dominion, and varying in scale from organisations smaller than a Kachin mung to principalities that could rival Burma itself in political power.

But, apart from these straight forward differences in the scale of the political hierarchy, there were important differences in the type of linkage upon which political authority depended.

In all the "primitive" hill societies, whether they are of the loose knit "democratic" type or of the hierarchical "autocratic" type, the linkage between the component elements of the structure is provided by kinship and ritual. In terms of persons the society is a network of linked lineages united by ties of kinship; in terms of territory the state is a patchwork of areas over which these lineages have rights of tenure; authority - the control of persons - finds its sanction in the ritual control of the fertility of the land and the general well being of the state.

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(Note continued from page 338) alternative rather than graded ranks. There were complications in that some types of village wards were elements of military regiments and a man's civil and military obligations might sometimes conflict, e.g. a military sawng might have authority over men not of his own village. The hereditary myethuay corresponded in many respects to the Shan htamong or the Kachin mung duwa.



In part these principles still apply even in the larger states of the plains. Even the King of Burma was required to undertake personally an act of ritual ploughing at the beginning of every rains,<sup>1</sup> and in recent years this ceremony has, on occasion, been undertaken by the Prime Minister of British Burma. The majority, if not all, the modern Shan Sawbwas still have ritual functions of a similar order. But, in general in the larger states, personal links based on kinship are replaced by, or duplicated by personal links based on money payment or service.

During the 19th Century, when most of the Shan States were dependencies of the Burmese crown, though the lines of succession among the various Sawbwas was usually according to traditional rules, and though kinship links were established with the Burman court through the compulsory exchange of women, a new Sawbwa was not confirmed in his title except against payment of some substantial lump sum, towards which the Sawbwas own adherents were doubtless unwilling contributors.

In Burma proper the break away from kinship organisation went considerably further. While the village headmen (yaathugyi) usually, and the township headman (gyathugyi) occasionally, were hereditary, all the higher grades in the scale were arbitrary appointments sold in effect to the highest bidder

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1. let win mingala. For description see Scott (1) Chapter XXIV.



"The Emperor gives no salary to the Madarins, indeed before anyone can obtain the dignity, he must spend large sums in presents; and in order to maintain himself in it, still larger ones are necessary, not only to the Emperor but also to his queens and all the principal persons about his court. To this must be added the expenses of these grantees....which must be proportionable to their dignity; and when we consider that the money for all this must be furnished by the people under their care, it will easily be imagined, what dreadful oppression is put in practice to draw it from them."<sup>1</sup>

But independently of this structure of corrupt officialdom all the various provinces, towns, townships etc were let out to "eaters", who were mostly members of the Royal Household.

In theory the myo-sa ("township eater") system seems to have been a fairly straight forward species of feudalism. The taxes due to the crown were in theory supposed to be a tenth of the produce and were a joint obligation of the village community as a whole. But the greater part of the territory being let out to members of the Royal Household and other officials on service tenure, these tenure holders, the myo-sa, became entitled to whatever taxes were due to the crown.<sup>2</sup>

In practice it was not so simple. The procedure of collecting taxes was haphazard and accomplished through a hierarchy of officials, each man squeezing as much as possible from his subordinates and paying as little as possible to his superiors. The authorities differ as to how the system worked

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1. Sangermano (1), 94.
  2. The thatthanedahouse tax of the immediate pre-British period was a reformed version of this system. See Scott(1) Chapter LVI; Scott(11)150/152; Sangermano(1)Chapter XII.



and there was probably much local variation, but I fancy Sangermano is correct when he stresses the duplication of the structure

The Governors of cities are invested by the sovereign with the right of the sword as it is called or the right of inflicting capital punishment, which is too often exercised not only against the guilty, but against private enemies. Smaller cities and villages have a chief who is styled Miedighi (myethuayi) .... and in the latter loadighi (yua thuyi) .... as all these places are given by the Emperor to his children or other Mandarins for their maintenance, these feoffees or satara, as they are called have also a judge there on their own account.<sup>1</sup>

Scott seems to deny this double hierarchy<sup>2</sup> but was evidently puzzled that the unrestrained despotism which he describes should have worked at all.

It is singular that under a rule so completely despotic as that of Burma where every man was the King's slave.... the right of land tenure should always have been so fixed and certain.

Two factors I think account for this paradox. The first is the economic fact that Burmese agriculture is intrinsically prosperous so that the village community can maintain its stability even in face of gross maladministration and exploitation; and the second is to be found in Sangermano's account. Since the direct agents of the crown and the agents of the myosa were not necessarily the same people the villagers could play off one party against the other so as to achieve comparatively fair treatment.

1. Sangermano (1) 83.
2. Scott (1) 518/19
3. Scott, (1) 527.

In North Burma in 1835 the myosa of Rhame was one of the queens, and was by birth a princess in the Royal line of the Ahom Princes of Assam; the myosa of Mogaung was her brother the Tippam Rajah, who was a pretender to the throne of Assam recently annexed by the British. Though these "myosa"ships were gifts from the King of Burma, the princes concerned had an hereditary title to the area through their kinship connection with the former Shan Saohwas of Mogaung. There were considerable colonies of personal adherents of the myosa actually living in Mogaung and Rhame, but this whole structure was quite distinct from the office and jurisdiction of the myo-wun who were Burmans bent on taxing their respective provinces to the utmost limit. (2)

At the more intimate village level of organisation it is much more difficult to assess the critical differences between the typical hill organisation and that of the plains.

Perhaps the most striking feature of contrast is the decrease in the importance of lineage when we come to the plains. How far there is anything that might be called a clan structure among the more sophisticated Shans I have been unable to discover but certainly there is scarcely any among the Burmese. (2) The Burman child is named not according

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1. Harnay (1); Bayfield (1). See also Chapter VI.

2. See Appendix Matriline in Burma.



to family but according to the day of the week, and names can be changed later on if found unfavourable. Kinship terminology is not so much classificatory as indiscriminate and non differentiating. The prohibited degrees of matrimony are practically limited to the immediate household. (1) In rural areas therefore the village though not an endogamous unit does tend to form a group of very closely knit relatives; a group moreover which has no particular unilateral segments that are likely to result in fission. Such a structure correlates well with the system of land tenure. As we have seen in the last Chapter the population density of the plains would have to be vastly higher than it is now to reach critical limits from the point of view of self sufficiency. With wet paddy plains cultivation and the existing population there is no pressure on resources, so that a high degree of integration in the village composition is suitable, in contrast to the segmentary organisation which is suitable where economic conditions are at a critical stage. Scott has the following:

The estate left by the original occupier was seldom broken up. The heirs tilled parts of it or gathered the whole crop in successive years; so that the land did not require to be split up into infinitesimal parts. This practice was rendered all the easier

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1. Mother, daughter, sister, half sister, aunt, grandmother and granddaughter - but no one else.  
See Scott (1) 6, 7, 59.

by the thinness of the population. It was open to anyone at any time to carve for himself out of the forest a holding of his own, and thus there was no temptation to break up the original family acres.... The fondness with which the people cling to the ancestral acres has something of almost religious fervour in its tenacity. In Upper Burma to the present day, land is never sold as the term would be understood in Europe. The transaction which goes by the name of a sale is, in reality, a kind of mortgaging .... The estate passes from one occupant to another for a certain sum of money, and it is clearly understood that if at any time the original owner is in a position to reclaim his property he may do so whether the purchaser likes it or not." (1)

Since all the descendants, male and female, get shares (2) in the inheritance, this means in effect that though land is "privately owned", yet for working purposes the village with its population of closely related families works all its lands on what the Russians might call a "collective" basis.

In my analysis of a typical hill society I found that the village consisted of a lineage core which possessed prior rights of tenure and embryo satellite lineages attached to the core by ties of kinship. All rights of tenure were vested in the household and the lineage rather than in the individual or the simple family. In contrast, in the Burman plains village,

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1. Scott (1) 527-528. The reference of course is to pre-British conditions.
  2. The theoretical rules of inheritance are very complicated. See Sangerman (1) 225-227, 230-235. The most striking feature is the high proportion of the estate passing to the female heirs in all circumstances.



the discrete lineages largely disappear and tenure rights nominally rest with the individual and the simple family; but in practice the village remains virtually a joint working group, the individuals of which are linked by kinship bonds. The crucial difference is thus seen to be that the Burman village is less likely to split through fission and this is to be correlated with the absence of any pressure on available resources.

If this analysis is correct it can be seen that the process of transition from one type of organisation to the other need involve no drastic readjustments for the individuals concerned. Change in either direction could readily come about over a period through a series of relatively minor structural modifications.

#### The significance of Buddhism for the Social Structure.

An apparently more fundamental distinction between the hills and plains villages here described lies in the fact that the latter are all Buddhist. We need to consider what this implies in terms of structural relations.

In the first place it is important to realise that Buddhism comprises only a part of the Burman's ritual observances. As Scott puts it, "as a simple matter of fact, it is undeniable that the propitiating of the nets is a question of daily concern to the lower class Burman,

while the worship at the pagoda is thought of once a week." (1)

Every house has its household guardian nat (2)

(eing-soung nat), and every village its village guardian nat (3)

(yua-soung nat) with its shrine usually under a sacred peepul tree near the village entrance. Evidence is lacking as to the way in which these nats are deemed to be related to either the founders or the present occupants of the village, but some connection seems probable. As with the hill nats already described, distinction must be drawn between the guardian nats - who have the attributes of royalty - and the pure sprites, (nat sehn), who like the Kachin sawn, jahtung etc are supposed to be derived from persons who have died a violent death. Scott too mentions "Boomadee, the guardian of the earth, and Na-gyee, the guardian of the grain" but there is nothing to indicate how far these have a role similar to the Kachin ga nat or are subject to control through the guardian nats. It is clear however that the general structural pattern of animist ritual is on the same lines as in the hills so that a transitional community would have no difficulty

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1. Scott (1) 229

2. Ibid 233

3. Ibid 231, 234.

4. Ibid 237. Among most of the hill tribes the death of a woman in childbirth is regarded as particularly certain to result in a vicious ghost. I have no evidence as to whether this is also the case among the Burmese.



in modifying its ideology in this respect.

Buddhism however is another matter and has no counterpart in the pagan hills. It is an observable fact that the dominant communities in all the larger political groupings whether they call themselves (or are called) Burman, Shan, Palaung, Taungthu etc. are all nominally Buddhists. This appears to be true even of those states which lie across the China border, though the Buddhism in the latter case is of the Chinese variety. <sup>(1)</sup> The only exceptions to this generalisation seem to be the Meithei of Manipur who, though labelled Hindu, have in fact a fairly specialised cult of their own, and the pre-British Ahom of Assam, who also, from the 16th Century onwards, were Hindu.

The explanation for this is possibly to be found in a

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1. i.e. Mahayana as opposed to Hinayana. Theoretically the two schools have a difference of dogma in that the Mahayana accept the survival and transmigration of the individual human soul, whereas in Hinayana rebirth is only from the common pool of existence. In practice all Burmese countrymen believe not only in the survival and rebirth of individual souls but in their conversion into nats as well.

In Burma however while the nats are, as it were, parasitic on Buddhism, they are only tolerated but not approved. In China on the other hand all sorts of local saints are incorporated into the Buddhist scheme in the guise of Kwan-yin and other bodhisattvas, much as in the past the Catholic Church incorporated local deities as Catholic Saints.

See Reichelt (1) Esp. Chapter VI. Applaten (1).

negative. The straight forward ancestor worship, - to which the various "animist" cults of the hills can be reduced, - cannot be sustained among populations of the size found in the plains States. Such populations even if they retain an ancestor cult as part of their ritual equipment need to support this with a State Religion of a more sophisticated kind. That the State Religion in question happens to be Buddhist rather than Hinduism, Islam or Christianity<sup>ry</sup> this is an accident of history, but it is worth noting that Buddhism, the hierarchical structure of which is strikingly similar to that of the Roman Catholic Church<sup>(1)</sup> is very appropriate to the type of political situation which we have been describing.

In a simple segmentary society, the political hierarchy, when it develops as such, may be compared to a simple chain which is as strong only as its weakest link. In a ritual sense the king or paramount chief controls directly only his personal followers, otherwise his control is indirect, he exercises control only over his "barons" or subordinate chiefs who in turn control their henchmen who control their followers and so on. The mass of the population has no direct ritual obligation to the king; each man is the subject of his own immediate overlord.

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1. Reichelt (1) Preface by L.H. Roots.



An ancestor cult, such as has been described in Chapter III, mirrors this system, and thereby justifies it, but it does not reinforce it in any material sense.

The effectiveness of such a system as a practical instrument of authority bears an inverse relation to the size of the group concerned.

So long as the total group is small or locally condensed the "king" can continue to assert his personal authority and prestige through direct contact even though in a ritual sense his authority only extends to his personal followers. But if the total group is large and dispersed the personal touch is lost; the king becomes only a name, the real power lies with his more accessible subordinates.

In contrast to this if the simple feudal order operates in conjunction with an independent church hierarchy such as that of the mediæval Catholic church or Burmese Buddhism the pattern approaches more nearly to that of the modern police state. The feudal hierarchy remains, but the church hierarchy is independent of it and both centre ultimately on the person of the king; if then the king's secular subordinates are recalcitrant and threaten fission or rebellion he can go over their heads and exert pressure on their followers directly, through the instrument of the church. Harvey thus describes this dual order as it appeared in Burma.

The King was head of the Buddhist Church. His chaplain was a primate who prevented schism, managed church lands and administered clerical discipline, through an ecclesiastical commission administered and paid by the King. The primate prepared the annual clergy list, giving particulars of age and ordination, district by district and any person who claimed to be a cleric and was not in the list was punished. A district governor was precluded by benefit of the clergy from passing judgement on a criminal cleric, but he framed the trial record and submitted it to the palace; the primate passed orders, unfrocking the cleric and handing him over to secular justice." (1)

The Burmese Kings thus seem to have had three channels of authority through which they might exert pressure on their subjects. Firstly through the feudal hierarchy of Viceroys, Governors, Myothugyi and so on; secondly through the myosa; and thirdly through the priesthood.

Tawngpeng: an example of an intermediate State.

One can infer that some similar duplication of control existed in the smaller Buddhist States as well. Direct evidence on the subject is scanty, but Mrs Milne's (2) description of the Palaung State of Tawngpeng at least shows that a Buddhist State can incorporate an "animistic"

1. G.E. Harvey in The Cambridge History of India.

As an indication of the power of the Church, Harvey further notes that in 1887 after Thibaw had been deposed the Primate approached the British commander in chief and offered to "preach submission to the English in every village throughout the land" provided only the jurisdiction of the Buddhist hierarchy as a State religion were confirmed. The British ignored the suggestion on the grounds that they could not interfere with religious freedom.

2. Milne (11)



ritual hierarchy. Incidentally the Palaungs are generally regarded as much more fervent Buddhists than their Shan neighbours.

Tawngpeng is an exception to the rule that the Shan type of political state is necessarily based upon a central core of wet paddy land. Although there is a certain amount of wet paddy in Tawngpeng the prosperous economy of the State is based upon the production of tea, for which it has been famous for several centuries. It thus provides an example of a hill society which has freed itself from the limitations of a subsistence economy by the systematic development of a cash crop. That the risks run are fully appreciated is shown by the fact that formerly no trading caravans were admitted into the State unless they brought with them a cargo of rice.<sup>(2)</sup>

There is good reason to think that Tawngpeng Palaungs did not accept Buddhism earlier than the 16th century.<sup>(2)</sup> Prior to that date they may be supposed to have had some sort of nat ritual analogous to that of the modern Kachins. As with the Burmans, the Palaungs still have an elaborate and socially approved system of spirit worship which exists side by side with the Buddhist system. The ancestor cult

1. Scott (11) 494.

2. Milne (11) 312.

implications are fairly clear cut. The terms karbu (the spirit or soul of living things) and karnam (the spirit of a deceased) as described by Milne seem to correspond almost exactly to the Kachin terms tan and nat. Each village has a karnam who is its guardian spirit and is associated with the founder lineage of that village. For example

At Tawnngma there is the most powerful of all the good spirits, the Ta Kar-lu ... He is said to have been a brave soldier who came from Ayuthia in Siam with the ancestors of the Tawnngma people, and became one of their guardian spirits. (1)

But in addition to these there is a spirit Ta So-Mong (2) described as "the guardian spirit of the State of Tawnngpeng. The ritual of this mung nat - to use the terminology of Chapter III - was cared for by a special priest the Ta Pleng (3) a man chosen from the family of the Chief of Tawnngpeng.

The present Tawnngpeng however is an aggregate of some seven smaller though similar "mung".

1. Ibid. 349/50. of. 351.

"At Kangwantok the chief karnam is named the Ta Pan. He was a great soldier who came to the place with the early settlers ... In nearly every case the guardian karnam of a village is the spirit of some brave soldier who was killed in battle, generally fighting for the Palaungs; but occasionally a Chief who fought against them has been adopted as their guardian spirit. The title Ta has the force of "Grandfather."

2. Ibid. 349.

3. The Ta Pleng is known to the Burmese as the Damadaw Sawbwa and is described under that name by Scott and Hardiman, Gazetteer, Pt.1. Vol.1. p491.



"It is said that in ancient times, in each of the seven divisions of the State of Tawngpeng there was a Ta Fleng. Now instead of seven there are only two, the chief Ta Fleng, who lives not far from Namhsan (the State capital), and a minor Ta Fleng who has his dwelling at Kangwantok." (1)

"In old times the districts were governed under the Chief by minor Chiefs and officials, whose office was hereditary; that is to say the office remained in the family, though not necessarily descending from father to son. These officials generally claimed descent from one of the seven sons of an early chief named K'un Mao, and any chief belonging to this old royal family is considered of better birth and has a higher standing than the rest of the people who can claim no royal ancestors." (2)

"The Pawlam in the Tawngpeng State are a body of Palaungs who were hereditary agents of the different clans. They live only at the headquarters of the Chief of the State and perform the same duties as did the myugun in the Burmese King's time. All the business of the clan is conducted by the Pawlam of the clan. Twice yearly the Pawlam went to his clan, collected taxes due to the Chief, and paid the money to him at his headquarters". (3)

These quotations show that while on the one hand the Tawngpeng State had a segmentary structure closely parallel to that described for the Jinghpaw, and that this structure was backed up by an hierarchical ancestor cult, yet on

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1. Ibid. 347.

2. Ibid. 24. Compare the status of the du baw and ma gam sayu lineages among the Jinghpaw which claim descent from the 9 sons of Wahkyet Wa Magam.

3. Lewis (11) 21. The myugun (myogun) seems to have been the representative of the Provincial Governor (myowan) at the King's court. Compare also the point noted by Scott that the heirs of the Shan Sawbwas were required to reside at the King's court.

the other hand the system of revenue collection and administration was on a Burmese pattern. Besides which the Falaungs are Buddhists! Just how far the Chief of Tawngpeng could be considered the head of the church within his state in the sense that the King of Burma was head of the church within the whole kingdom is not clear, but I infer something of the sort. The chief monk of the State, the chau-sa-ra-daw, is stated to live at Nankhsan and is (1) "above all the other monks in the State". I infer that the Chief is the temporal overlord of the chausa-ra-daw in much the same way as he is temporal overlord of the te-pleng.

#### A further example from Kengtung

As a further demonstration that even in large relatively sophisticated Buddhist States the Buddhist ritual structure may be duplicated by an "animist" ancestor cult which mirrors the more primitive structure of segmenting lineages, it is worth quoting Telford's description of a ritual observed by him in Kengtung. See Pa Kum it may be noted might otherwise be written Sao-hpa Kum (Sawhwa Kum) and looks rather like an eponymous ancestor of the present ruling family who, according to Stevenson, call themselves (1) Hkum!

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1. Stevenson (v) 13. Possibly a misprint for Hkun.



"Groves adjacent to their villages are sacred to the Shans; for within these quiet and silent woods dwell spirits which protect the best interests of the community. Such spirit grounds are called long Hkam within which the felling of trees is strictly prohibited. In the midst of a long Hkam there is usually an immense Banyan Tree or some other tree of peculiar growth which is chosen by the Shans as the particular residence of the grove spirit.

The Nawng Tung Lake spirit of Kengtung town resides in a Mai Hui tree at the edge of the Sawbwas lake. Formerly Kengtung was a Wa State but the Wa were conquered by invaders from Siam. Though the Wa were driven from Kengtung, the spirit of their great chief Wa Kang, remained behind and to this present time the present Shans believe that it is the ghost of Wa Kang that presides over the lake.

Of all the nats of Kengtung the most venerable is the Soa Fa Kum, which resides in a large tree, situated near the heart of the city .... In every large Shan town there is a tree to which the Shans give the name "Sai Mung". The word "Sai" means heart, and "Mung" means country. There is such a tree in the city of Kengtung and at the base of the tree there is a brick altar. In the Shan town of Mung Yang I watched for hours during two days, when Buddhist priests and laymen performed religious ceremonies of an animistic nature at the base of a Sai Mung tree. This rite was public and social in character and involved the whole community. Upon four large newly, but roughly woven bamboo trays, offerings of every description were deposited. The gifts consisted of clay images of all domestic animals; pieces of cloth which represented wearing apparel; tea and tobacco and all manner of foods. The trays replete with their offerings were taken and placed at the foot of the Sai Mung tree, at which time prayer was offered by a man dressed in the clothes of a layman. After the dedication of the gifts the trays .... were taken to the four furthestmost boundaries of the township and there abandoned ..... on the second day of the ceremony, Buddhist priests in their yellow robes sat upon mats on the ground and the long row which they formed faced towards the Sai Mung tree which was about 20 yards distant. In the intervening space between the priests and the tree were seated

the representative heads of households and each sat under his own little tabernacle which consisted of a tripod of bamboo poles, in the top joints of which was a little rice, covered over and secured with paper or cloth. Around the trunk of the tree were placed white cotton strings which extended towards and connected with each and every tripod and the ends of these unbroken cords, which seemed to bind all participants in a bond of unity and good fellowship, were deposited before the seated priests who recited prayers that blessings might come to the whole town which the assembled company represented ..... (1)

It would be difficult to imagine a more perfect symbolic representation of the integration of an hierarchical ancestor cult into the fold of the Buddhist Church. Telford goes on

"Those friendly religious leaders (i.e. the Buddhist monks) told me that on the first day of the ceremony they exorcised the evil spirits from their midst and on the following day they requested that the good spirits should come and take control."

This seems a fair analysis. It will be remembered that in the Kachin ritual described earlier I argued that at the annual communal feasting at the village sacred grove (nunshang) the ultimate purpose is to appease the peculiarly sacred ga nat, the earth spirit that controls fertility. This spirit cannot be approached directly but only through the intercession of other somewhat less sacred nats; thus in a two day ceremonial, the initial sacrifices are to



relatively minor ancestor spirits working up gradually through the chief's spirit (the mung nat), to the celestial mu nats and finally to the ultra sacred ga nat. In the ritual described by Telford the mung nat symbol of the chief remains and his practical control over the living is well symbolized by the white cotton strings. But whereas, for the Kachin, intercession with the mung nat is achieved through offerings to other nats of a similar order, in the Shan symbolism there is "at the other end of the string" not a minor ancestor nat but a Buddhist priest. All the minor nats have been "thrown away" on the first day!

The clash of ethic between Buddhist and animist that is symbolized by the conversion of flesh and blood offerings into clay figures is even more clearly shown in the following further observation by Telford.

The Shan of Kengtung have many festival occasions during which time it is customary for them to kill cows and buffaloes. At the culmination of one of these feasts, I witnessed a very interesting early morning religious ceremony, which was conducted in the public square of the village. There were half a dozen yellow robed Buddhist priests seated in a row on the ground and immediately opposite the priests was a line of elderly Shan men and women and between the two rows were numerous gifts which the kneeling Shan elders had offered to the priests. When we happened along the priests were reciting prayers and continued to do so while we quietly observed the ceremony. When it was all over we enquired concerning the meaning of the ceremony and the Shan elders told us that the priests had been praying for them. During the past seven days of

feasting they had killed a large number of animals and their slaying of these animals may have involved them in guilt and they wished to be free of the harmful consequences which might result from their actions." (1)

Such an arrangement is not stable; with or without additional external influence a ritual compromise so precariously balanced is bound to be substantially modified in one direction or another within the course of a few generations.  
(2)

#### The Role of Buddhism in Village Structures.

My conclusion then is that the Buddhist Church by providing a secondary channel of authority tends to counteract the tendency to fission that otherwise begins to take effect whenever segmentary societies become at all large. But independently of this there are other ways in which Burmese Buddhism suits the requirements of the plains community.

We have noted above that the Burmese village community though possessing a close knit unity lacks the characteristic lineage structure of a hill village. Transition between these two extremes might appear difficult. The sociologist naturally wonders whether the ritual backed linkages

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1. Telford (1) 110.

2. For further examples of ritual relations between Shans and their hill neighbours see Hitchford (1) on Wes.



provided by a system of related lineages are adequate replaced by the rather shapeless network of bilateral kin linkages that form the pattern of structure in a Burmese village. I have asserted that there is a strong sense of village unity, but what is the ritual expression of this unity? The answer would seem to be - the pangvi kyaung, the village monastery school.

Every male Burman, at adolescence or before, must don the yellow robe and enter a monastery; the period involved may be reckoned in days, weeks, months or years, but the rule is inflexible. In entering the monastery the novitiate discards all semblance of earthly rank shaves his head and is given a new name - pwa<sup>1</sup> - which is discarded again when he resumes the lay habit. He starts as a mendicant of the lowest rank, equal with all his fellow novitiates, whatever their birth. His seniors are his elders

"The doors of the kyaung are always open as well to those who wish to enter as to those who wish to leave it. The longest stayer has the greatest honour. A visitor monk .....who has passed many lenten seasons in his yellow robe ....will receive the homage of the head of the monastery, even if the latter be a geing-oke and the stranger but a simple "pohn-gyee"<sup>2</sup>

Granted that the formal code is about as much honoured in the breach as in the performance it remains true that this procedure, backed as it is with all the paraphernalia of an elaborate ritual, serves to break down conventions of lineage

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1. Scott (1) 22.  
2. Idid 110/111



superiority, and stimulates a sense of village unity with respect for village elders irrespective of their lineage affiliation.

### Summary.

The following is a summary of the theoretical implications of this Chapter.

I have argued that the lack of economic balance between various hill areas and between adjacent hills and plains areas implies that not only are such areas economically interdependent but that they are also politically interdependent, and this in turn implies, not cultural homogeneity but cultural continuity. In such a continuum groups studied at random will appear different and are liable to be graced with the title of distinct "races", but the nature of such contrasts is arbitrary and varies according to the size and distribution of the observed sample. Viewed from this approach the multifarious tribes and "races" of Burma are largely an invention of British scholasticism.

In contrast I argue a more accurate picture is that of small units of population, notably single families, extended families, and small lineages, which move from one area to another under the stress of economic and political pressures. This movement may carry them from one economic milieu into another; from one political sphere into another. At any given time all groups are in actual process of shedding old



cultural attributes and acquiring new ones.

I have quoted a number of examples with a view to demonstrating this cultural overlap, and I have stressed in particular the two features of contrast, change in internal village structure, and change in the scale of the political hierarchy. In simplest terms these contrasts may be summarised thus.

Hill societies whether they consist of small villages widely dispersed or of larger villages in compact areas are in terms of population - small scale. The local community is composed of lineages linked by bonds of kinship and common interests in the land, but the linkage is weak; the whole structure is liable to fission at any time. Where the community is wholly dependent upon taungya cultivation and individual land holdings are loosely defined, the structure only holds together through the personal dominance of the leaders. Where there are permanent or semi-permanent areas of cultivation, the family's vested interest in the land acts as a deterrent against fission. But, as we saw in the last Chapter, nearly all the hill populations necessarily approach critical densities and under such circumstances there must always be marginal families or lineages which will prefer to break away rather than stay. It is therefore appropriate in the hill communities that the linkages in the political structure should not be too strong, since fissile adjustments are



necessary if dangerous economic stresses are to be avoided.

In contrast where wet paddy plains cultivation prevails the critical limits of population density are not even approached in present day Burma. Therefore there is no need for fission and a larger scale political structure is practicable.

In transition to a larger scale the hierarchy of kinship linkages tends to change into a feudal hierarchy based upon a commercial contract rather than ancestral right. But the obvious weaknesses of such an impersonal channel of authority are reinforced by using the Church hierarchy as a duplicate channel of authority.

In the same way I have shown that the ritual system of household, lineage, village and mung nat ancestor spirits, which is so appropriate to the small scale, lineage based, structure of political organisation in the hills, is to some extent carried over into the larger scale organisation of the plains. But at the same time the importance of the individual lineage as a discrete unit of society is reduced through the device of Buddhist initiation. Intermediately a society such as the Tawngpeng Palaungs, as described in 1906, shows both types of ritual order - pagan and Buddhist - nicely balanced.

In the same way in matters of inheritance the norm moves over from inheritance by unilateral kin the hills to inheritance by bilateral kin in the plains. We saw in Chapter 3 that the



Jinghpaw norm is inheritance by the youngest son, this being consistent with a rapidly segmenting society; the Burmese norm on the other hand is joint interest by numerous relatives in the common family plot. The following two closely similar passages show the transition from one to the other.

In the first case Anderson (1868) is writing about the Shans of Netha. Although he calls them Shan, they are in fact the people known to the Burmese as Maingtha who call themselves A'chang. They have a Shan style culture; speak a dialect of Maru; and are economically closely linked with Kachins, Lisu and Shan Tayok in various directions:

"The chiefs although paying an annual tribute to the authorities at Mowken (Tengyueh) exercise full patriarchal authority in their states; assisted by a council of headmen, they adjudicate all cases, civil and criminal. The tsawbwa is the nominal owner of all land, but each family holds a certain extent, which they cultivate, paying a tithe of the produce to the chief. These settlements are seldom disturbed, and the land passes in succession the youngest son inheriting, while the elder brothers if the farm is too small, look out for another plot, or turn traders; hence Shans are willing to emigrate and settle on fertile lands, as in British Burma."<sup>1</sup>

In the second case Mrs. Milne (1906) is describing the system of tenure at Namhkam in the Shweli Valley 30 miles or so South of Netha. The population is still very mixed with much Kachin and Falaung infiltration but perhaps more definitely Shan than in the former case. Namhkam forms a part

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1. Anderson (11) 302

<sup>1</sup>ising  
In the text he is generating about "Shans" but his information came from the Sawbwa of Netha.



of the British Shan State of North Meiktila

"The surrounding paddy lands, which reach the outskirts of Shan hamlets, are cultivated by men whose ancestors have received certain land rights from former chiefs. The Sao-hpa (Sawbwa) is the real owner of all the land over which he rules, but there are certain hereditary rights over paddy lands which are respected so long as the yearly taxes are paid, lands being held by the same family from one generation to another. The amount of taxation varies from year to year. It is paid partly in money; partly in rice."<sup>1</sup>

The meaning of "same family" in this context is vague, but there is no hint of any narrowly defined unilinear succession. Marriage rules seem to be as free and easy as those described by Scott for the Burmese. This Namkham tenure in the relatively ample Shweli valley seems in fact to be "typically Burmese"; further North in Motha where the wet paddy cultivated area is a narrow valley of inadequate dimensions the tenure is basically the same but with the "typically Kachin" twist of ultimogeniture which serves to encourage a part of population to emigrate or take up trade.

Moving in the opposite direction, into the Kachin Hills immediately bordering on Motha Anderson has the following

"Among these hill tribes the patriarchal system of government has hitherto universally prevailed, although a certain, or rather uncertain obedience is nominally due to Burmese and Chinese authorities. Thus the Ponsee and Ponline Chiefs had each received a gold umbrella and the title of paoada raze from the King of Burma. Each clan is ruled by an hereditary chief or tsawbwa, assisted by lieutenants or pawmines, who adjudicate all



disputes among the villagers. Their office is also hereditary and properly limited to the eldest son, whereas the chieftainship descends to the youngest son or failing sons to the youngest surviving brother. The land also follows this law of inheritance, the younger sons in all cases inheriting, while the elder go forth and clear wild land for themselves."<sup>1</sup>

The distinction here drawn between the ultimogeniture succession of the chiefs and the primogeniture succession of the "pawmines" (i.e., the salang) is most interesting. With such a differential, the point of fission in the political structure is far more likely to occur at the chief level than at the salang level, and this in turn serves to strengthen the chief's authority over his salang ni. The theory that the succession of salang ni should pass by primogeniture has now disappeared in these hills, and today, apart from the fact that Government reserves complete freedom of action on all appointments, every petty village headman with even the remotest claim to du bay descent tries to set himself up as an ums du, a chief descended through a line of youngest sons.

It seems to me that cumulatively all this evidence builds up into a powerful probability. Naturally all the ethnographic accounts treat of their material as if conditions were static. The writers describe what they see, or are told, and assume that it has always been so. The resultant total picture is therefore a composite of contrasted clearly

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1. Anderson (11) 126/7.



differentiated cultures or "races". Starting with the opposite assumption that the whole forms a continuum; I have shown that the same structural principles recur in all parts of that continuum, so that structurally speaking there is nothing very complicated about elements of population moving from one part of it to another; I have further shown that there are strong economic reasons why such movement should in fact always be taking place; and I have shown finally that the types of contrast that are reported are in fact consistent with such movement.

From all this I infer that a fairly rapid cultural flux is in fact the norm throughout this area, which implies that none of the more picturesque overt characteristics of the various supposedly distinct tribes are in any way stable. Since the British appeared on the scene Kachins have learnt to speak new languages, wear different clothes, build different houses etc. etc. Is this due to the decadent consequences of the impact of the West? My own view is that they might well have changed just as much (though not in quite the same ways), whether the British had been there or not!

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## Chapter VI

### Evidence of Cultural Flux - (1) Assam

#### Relevance of the Assam situation to the general discussion

In the foregoing Chapters I have presented the argument at a more or less theoretical level. Such evidence as has been presented to support my general thesis has been of a general and discursive type. Thus in the last chapter we have ranged from Annam to the Naga Hills. At a superficial level of analysis I consider this wide ranging legitimate, for, as was argued in Chapter 2, the general form of the political and economic organisation is similar throughout the Indo China peninsular. Now however we need to go into the matter in greater detail.

Ideally we want to follow up in detail the cultural development of a few selected families in a given locality over the period of say a century so as to see whether in fact either individually or as groups the members underwent any substantial cultural change in the interval. Whether our sample families were drawn from peoples of the plains or peoples of the hills we should doubtless find that in the course of the century ending in 1941 the living members

of the lineage had become in greater or less degree sophisticated through direct or indirect contacts with "the West". I would not in any way belittle the importance of this type of "acculturation" or "culture contact", but in this book I am more especially concerned with fluxional changes within<sup>a</sup> context of variations already existing locally in the cultural continuum at the beginning of the period of observation. In the terminology of this book I am interested in seeing whether Kachins have become Shans, or Shans have become Kachins, and if so what changes in the political and economic environment have accompanied these changes.

Let us briefly reconsider the argument as it now stands. I have argued in the first place that if such overt cultural phenomena as language, dress and religion be ignored, then there is, within the area I have defined as the Kachin Hills Area, a certain similarity of organisation not only among all the various hill peoples (Kachins), but also as between the hill peoples and the plains peoples (Shans). Shan society and Kachin society have both developed historically in accordance with well understood segmentary principles, but whereas the Kachins have developed cultural characteristics which make them well adapted to living in the high mountains, the Shans<sup>a</sup> par excellence are adapted to rice cultivation in the valleys and plains. Although it has been

(1)  
claimed that much of the hill territory now occupied by

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(1) Cochrane (1) 29; Enriquez ii. 20



Kachins was once occupied by Shans, it is clear that such "Shans" must have been in organisation and general economy very like Kachins, and in many respects very unlike the Shans that we now know. On the other hand we have a number of historical instances in which Kachins have penetrated into typical Shan plains territory in substantial numbers. My thesis is that such groups on entering a "Shan type of environment" are subjected to various pressures and incentives both political and economic to adopt a Shan mode of life, and that in fact over a period they do so. I argue that the groups we know as Kachins and Shans are determined not ethnically but culturally. The contrast in culture is an expression primarily of the contrast in economic organisation, and in any case exists only as a modal contrast. Synchronically in the historical moment, the division is reasonably clear cut, Shans on the one hand; Kachins on the other. Diachronically however it is possible that there is some degree of flux between one group and the other; the ancestors of some Shans may have been Kachins, the ancestors of some Kachins may have been Shans. As a <sup>theoretical</sup> ~~transient~~ postulate I have argued that this is in fact the normal situation. If I am correct in my conclusion that over large parts of the hill area a dry rice economy cannot be self supporting then some

such mixing of the ethnic constituents of the population is inevitable. We have seen that this mixing may be correlated with several theoretically possible "solutions" to the situation of economic disequilibrium - e.g. labour service of the Kachins among the Shans, enslavement of the Shans by the Kachins, or even a mere drift of population from hills to plains.

That is the theoretical position. Can it be demonstrated in a concrete case?

Ideally we should choose our sample from a group of Kachins and Shans with no contact with "the West" at all and this suggests turning to Chinese and Burmese sources for our initial evidence. This however is not a practical proposition. Already in Chapter 2 we have seen something of the general vagueness of traditional Burmese knowledge of the hill peoples. Chinese sources though more voluminous are almost equally valueless for our present purposes. Just as the Burmese had words such as Khyan (ꠠꠢꠦ), Yaw (ꠠꠦ), and Tawangthu (ꠠꠦꠦꠦ)<sup>(1)</sup> which could be applied indiscriminately to almost anyone of a rather "wild and woolly" nature so the Chinese had such terms as je jen (wild man) and miao tse

1. Luce (111) paras 5 & 8.



(barbarians). Colloquially the Chinese usually refer to Burma Kachins as je jen. But does that mean that je jen equates consistently with either Kachin or Jinghpaw?

Unfortunately the Jinghpaw apply the term je jen (yawyin) to the Lisu. In a recent series of politico-ethnographic studies put out under the auspices of the Yunnan Government the Kachins of the Triangle are referred to as P'ou Man. (1)

(2) Young who crossed the same area with a Chinese guide in 1905 refers to them as Fu Ma. (3) Davies however who made a special

effort to sort out the Chinese terminology identifies the P'ou Man with the Wa-La (of the Wa States), while Hsu identifies the P'ou Man with the P'ou Jen and Po-P'ou of classical antiquity. (4) He further makes the P'ou Jen equivalent to the Po-yi whom he says are the modern Pai-yi (Shans). It is clear from this that the Chinese data are unusable.

It is preferable therefore to turn to British sources which have the merit of relative precision. It is necessary however always to recollect that situations reported on by

1. Siguret (1) 95, 122.

2. Young (1) 165. Young suggests that Fu Ma is based on "Burma" ignoring the fact that Burma to the Chinese is Kien.

3. Davies (1)

4. Hsu (1), 121, 155.

Englishmen are ipso facto "culture contact" situations, in the sense of being subject to "western influence".

Taking the British records as our primary source our "zero point" of observation may be considered as 1820 which seems to be the first occasion on which an Englishman encountered a Kachin. The only criterion for this date is that that is where the records happen to start; there is no sort of suggestion that before that date the Kachins were living in blissful primitive isolation and that change only set in with the arrival of the British. My whole argument is the exact contrary of this. That my record must start only with the arrival of the British is unfortunate, for the picture is thereby greatly confused. Unquestionably the British provided a new and very important factor in the total situation and their arrival initiated changes of a new and quite unprecedented type; in observing the changing situation as it develops from 1820 onwards we need therefore to distinguish between those changes which are causally related to the presence of the British and those which might have taken place anyway whether the British had been there or not. Obviously we cannot make this distinction clear cut, but to think on these lines will help the analysis.

The British data relating to the Kachins fall conveniently into two distinct periods with a different



regional emphasis in each. During the first period from the beginnings of the first Burmese war up to the time of the Phayre Mission to Ava in 1855 we are concerned primarily (1) with the Kachins of Assam and the Hukawng Valley; during the second phase from 1855 to the present the emphasis is on the Kachins of Burma. During the first phase we see the Kachins through the eyes of men looking East from Sadiya in Assam; Burma itself is something of a land of mystery, and China is an El d'Orado somewhere exasperatingly just the other side of the mountains. During the early part of the second phase the objective is still "trade with China" but the point of observation has shifted from Sadiya to Rangoon and the talk is of railways rather than river transport and mule tracks. Finally, from 1885 onwards, the ulterior motive of trade with China loses force and Imperialist expansion becomes an end in itself.

The first Kachin territory to be annexed was that lying at the eastern end of Assam, in 1825. The process of annexation continued spasmodically for over a century. In theory the whole territory finally became at least partially administered in 1926 when Government took action to secure the release of "slaves" in the Hukawng and the Triangle. Yet even today there are numerous villages in the outlying fringes of the Nam Tami, Hkawng and Hukawng l. Yale (11)

Valley areas which have never been visited by a European.

In this Chapter we consider the available evidence concerning the relations of the Kachins and Shans (in the Assam, Mukuang Valley and Putao Areas) both towards each other and towards the Administration in the century following the zero point of 1822; but for the reasons just stated the bulk of this evidence concerns the first phase of British contact namely contact from Assam 1820-1855.

#### 'Annamese' and Shans.

At the beginning of the 19th Century the Ahom State with its capital at Jorhat comprised only the alluvial rice belt of the Brahmaputra River axis from Sadiya in the east to Goalpara in the West. (1)

The various petty hill states of Abore, Dufflas, Gavor etc. bordering on this valley were virtually independent though all of them to some extent depended on the plains for food. Buchanan mentions that the Gavo "Rajahs" owned rice land near the Brahmaputra and paid tribute to Assam on account of this land only. The

Abors and Dufflas on the other hand appear to have "taxed" their plains neighbours as a right. (2) Probably there had

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1. Buchanan (1) 600; Butler (1) Jorhat and Mungpore (Sibsagar) are both mentioned as the capital
  2. Buchanan (1) 619
  3. Butler (1) 204/220; Mackenzie (1) 55. Described as poor or "blackmail". In many cases the British continued the payments.



been a shift in political dominance consequent upon the decay of the Ahom State since the 16th Century. The Province of Sadiya, for example, which at the beginning of the 19th Century was a small pocket of territory at the extreme eastern end of the plain in the hands of a Khampti Shan usurper, had at one time extended along both sides of the Brahmaputra from the boundary of Assam proper to the extremity of the Kingdom, that is to say it had included the neighbouring semi-independent province of Muttuck as well as the Miri foothill north of the river which had later become subject to the Abers of the hills. (1)

The "Assamese" population of the Brahmaputra plain was an agglomerate partly Hindu partly Moslem assimilated from various indigenous and immigrant elements. The ruling group the Ahom were, in history, of Shan origin with close connections with the Maw Shans of Mogaung, but since the conversion of their King to Hinduism in 1655 they too had become "Assamese".

The kinship connection with the Maw Shans was however however maintained. Thus Buchanan mentions that despite the conversion to Hinduism "the worship of the family deity Chung was still followed and on the death of Gaurinath (2)

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1. Buchanan, (1) 623.

2. ibid 603.

Singh in 1795 it was considered that the "Khampti Rajah" had a plausible claim to the throne on the grounds that Godhedher Singh the first Hindu Rajah had been illegitimate. (1)  
 The Mogaung Shan State which was known to the Burmese and Manipuris as Fong or Song was known to the Assamese as Noca. (2) Buchanan states the language and customs of the people of Noca are the same as those which formerly prevailed among the proper Assamese, and between the two people there is still constant friendly intercourse and many natives of Noca are always to be found at the court of Jorhat."

Mogaung (Noca) had in point of fact been 'liquidated' by the Burmese during the 16th Century and from 1799 onwards, if not before, the Mogaung Sawbwa had been replaced by a Burmese appointed Myo Wan. Significantly however after the British annexation the Assamese queen of the King of Ava appears as Myo sa of Bhamo while her brother, now heir presumptive to the throne of Assam (i.e. the Tipam Rajah) appears as myo-sa of Mogaung. (3) Thus despite the Burmese annexation of Mogaung Maw Shkn (Ahom) princes were retained as titular overlords of the district. (4) Bayfield in 1836

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1. Ibid 663

2. Ibid 663

3. Hannay, 92, Bayfield, 184, 185, Cait (1) 324. For Tipam Rajah see Mackenzie 393; Buchanan (1) 635.

4. Bayfield, 185.



remarked of Mogaung

"Assamese slaves seem to form about one fourth of the whole population of the town ... Many were born here, some were brought from Assam by Burmese generals and many have escaped from Singpho slavery in the Hookeom (Hukawng). Judging from external appearances they are better off than their Shan or Burmese neighbours."

The implication is, I suggest, that the sharp contrast between "Assamese" on the one hand and north Burma Shans on the other was really a development of the post 1820 period, consequent upon the political separation of the two areas (1) into British and Burmese spheres with no intercommunication. Previously despite a contrast of language intercommunication by way of the Hukawng Valley and the Pangsan Pass was easy and permitted not only trade and political relations but an interchange of persons between the two areas.

It follows from this that the geographical position of the Kachins and Shans in Assam in relation to the Brahmaputra River axis may be compared to that of the Kachins and Shans in Burma in relation to the Irrawaddy River axis. In each case within the area limits we are considering the Tai speaking groups whom we now label Shan occupy the foothills and highland valleys rather than the main alluvial basin of the great rivers which are inhabited

1. The extent to which the Pangsan Pass route from Assam into the Hukawng decayed from being a main traderoote in the 1820 period to a state of complete impassability 40 years later is discussed by H.L.Jenkins, I, 11 and S.S.Poal especially Jenkins I, 71.

respectively by "Assamese" and "Burmese". In Assam there are other groups besides those of Tai speech who occupy this intermediate "hill-valley" position, for example the Meitheis of Manipur, but for the purposes of this book we are concerned only with the people of the plains and foothills bordering immediately onto the Kachin hills as previously defined.

At the beginning of the 19th Century this fringe area was occupied by an amalgam of "Shans" and Assamese" and "Kachins" (Singphoe) in much the same way as the similar plains around Bhamo, Myittha and Mogaung are today occupied by an amalgam of "Shans" and "Burmese" and "Kachins".

North East Assam in 1825 and the North Burma plains area in 1885 were very thinly populated. In both cases the officers immediately on the spot attributed this lack of population to "devastations" recently caused by neighbouring Kachins. More cautious consideration of the evidence tends to modify this view. The evidence regarding Bhamo is considered in the next Chapter. In the case of Assam it is noticeable that Buchanan writing in 1810 had heard of this devastation but attributed it to "the Moamons that savage people who carried desolation throughout a great



part of the Upper Provinces. (X) There may be some truth in this. From 1769 to 1818 there was almost incessant civil war in Assam between two rival political parties typified by two rival Hindu sects. The least successful of these the Moa Mareya (Moamorin, Moamuriah etc) had their especial centre at Muttuck in north east Assam and were possibly largely decimated as a penalty for rebellion.

(1)

Butler reports that after one insurrection

"the Muttuck chiefs and their followers were everywhere hunted down like wild beasts and put to death; neither men nor women nor children were spared. In fact such was the animosity of the Assamese against the Muttucks, for the time, that they seemed bereft of all feelings of mercy and compassion. Vast numbers of the Muttucks died of hunger in the jungles and an incalculable number perished by the sword of an insensate populace."

There are other possible immediate political causes for the small population of N.E. Assam in 1825. Thus between 1816 and 1824 the Burmese sent a whole series of armies into Assam at least one of which, under Bandula, (2) totalled some 25,000 men. The human transport requirements

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1. Butler (1) 100.

Butler wisely cautions

"As regards the Muttucks, the statements of the people connected with the late Court of Assam and the followers of Doorgo throughout the Province, ought to be received with a great deal of caution, for both classes are animated by a bitter spirit of hatred etc. etc.

Ibid 102.

2. S.E. Peal (11) 71.

(X) Buchanan (1) 642. cf. also Burma (1)



of such an army moving across the Patkoi range would be formidable to say the least and would account for large scale impressment of the local population. Travellers of the 1835 period in Burma estimated that there might be as many as 100,000 Assamese slaves in Burma at that time.

Personally however I feel that these stories of a golden age when Upper Assam was thickly populated are largely fabulous. It is noticeable that in late years when peace was assured the Administration had the greatest difficulty in maintaining an adequate labour force for the exploitation of local resources. Imported coolie labour constantly died off through the ravages of Malaria and Kala Aza. These conditions presumably prevailed also in pre-British days.

Granted then that the soil is very fertile yet under normal conditions the country is extremely unhealthy and indigenous populations show a striking tendency to die out.<sup>1</sup> Fortunately owing to the massive development of European industry in this area, notable that of tea cultivation, there is no longer a place for any border group between hills and plains proper; the area which in 1835 was thinly populated with communities of the type I have labelled Shan now consists of extensive tea gardens. The descendants of the former Shans have either been absorbed into the general Assamese population further down river or else been pressed back into the hills.

1. Assam (11)82.  
Butter (1) 108.



The labour in the tea gardens is provided by indentured coolie labour imported from South India. Throughout the last century however the suitability of "Shan" culture for this type of country impressed itself upon British observers and both Neufville<sup>1</sup> in 1830 and Jenkins<sup>2</sup> in 1870 are on record as advocating the encouragement of Shan immigration from the East.

#### Shans and Kachins in N.E. Assam.

This description of the general demographic setting emphasises once again the general indefiniteness of the cultural or "racial" labels as applied to Categories or groups of people and also the tendency towards flux or "assimilation" from one group into another. We need now to consider <sup>our</sup> on detailed field of "Shans" and "Kachins" at the extreme North East frontier of the Assam province. This detailed field is of small size, the whole scale of relationships considered is very small. Though some of the early literature, as we shall see, gives an exaggerated importance to the "Singpho", we are in point of fact, at any one time, dealing with only a few thousand Kachins, a few thousand Shans, perhaps half a dozen British officers and a Battalion of native troops.

In Assam the Shans are labelled Khampti,<sup>1</sup> a name which

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1. Buchanan (1) 663 refers to the country of the Khampti Rajah as West from Nora and nearly South from Jorhat. But his geography is all hearsay and very confused. The name appears also as Kaka Khamti, Khamtee, Khamptee etc.

links them directly with the Mkamti Shans of the Putao area, a district known to the earlier writers on Assam as Bor Khampti. The true Khampti, by which I mean the groups which could be regarded as direct colonists from Putao, were never numerous, - a few hundreds at the most; but after this nucleus had achieved some political importance in circumstances to be described, they became a focus for all the Tai speaking groups in the area. The Khampti of the literature, who from 1829 onwards are rated as several thousand strong, clearly comprise a number of distinct groups of Shans of differing ancestry; the term is in effect in most instances a synonym for all "the Shans of Assam."

Similarly the Kachins in Assam are not met with under that name but under the label Singpho. Singpho is a romanisation of the same word which in Burma appears as Chingpaw or Jinghpaw.<sup>1</sup> The Singpho of Assam however are, both in lineage and dialect, mostly members of the group known in Burma as the Teseen. The Kachins of the Mkamku Htangaw areas were known to the Teseen Singpho simply as Mkahku and this word appears in this sense, in various guises, in the early Assam literature.<sup>2</sup>

To appreciate the mutual relations between these "Khampti"

1. The first references of all is nearer to the Burma spelling. Thus Buchanan (1862) "South from the Abor is a country called Chingpho, which has a rajah independent of Assam and with whose people there is some commercial intercourse."
2. Thus Kakia (Neufville), Kkakio (Dalton) Kkakoo (Robinson); Kakoo (Hannay, 11)



and "Singpho" it is necessary that we consider to some extent the historical sequence of events that had preceded our zero point date of 1820.

### The Khamti Shans of Assam.

In Chapter 2 when reviewing the supposed history of the new Shans I pointed out that the existence in eastern Assam of a number of distinct Shan groups all to a greater or less degree assimilated into the "Assamese" indicated a persistent westward infiltration of Shans from the Khamti Long and Mogaung areas in Burma. At the beginning of the 19th Century, several of the most recent of these colonist groups preserved something of their cultural identity and were recognised as distinct from the general run of Assamese peasantry. Even during the 19th Century after the arrival of the British several further groups moved across the frontier east to west and at least one group moved back again from west to east.<sup>2</sup> It is worth summarising what we know of the various groups concerned:

"AHOM (Anhom). The Ahoms were the ruling group in the Shan State founded in the 13th Century as a colony from Mogaung. The Ahom ruling clique eventually adopted Hinduism and generally became "Assamese" but appear to have retained their kinship affiliations with their Burm Shan neighbours.

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1. Mackenzie (1) 57/60; Dalton 1, cvii these late arrivals were all simply classed as Khamti.

2. See below - Phakeal.



AITONIA (Itong, Aihun). According to traditions recorded by Bernard<sup>1</sup> in the Putao Area the Aihun Hkanyang Shans were the "original" Shan rulers in the Hkamti Long area having come previously from "Hkakao Kao Lon". Later they were driven out of Hkamti Long by the Mogaung Sawbwa Sao Sam Lon Mung who set up the "Paklongs" in their place. According to the Mong Mao tradition recorded by Mey Elias<sup>2</sup> the Mogaung Sawbwa Hkun Sam Long was the founder of the Shan State in Assam and the brother of the fabulous may Shan conqueror Hso Hkan Pa by whom he was later poisoned. Mac Gregor<sup>3</sup> earlier obtained a rather different story "About nine ages ago, a race of men called Lungphang, who said they came from Khenung (China)<sup>4</sup> drove the Aitonias out of the Nankiu<sup>5</sup> valley. The Aitonias were the leading men in the valley but many tribes were subject to them....The Aitonias fled principally over the Chaukan Pass and settled down in Mangpur, Sibsagar and other places in Assam." Hannay<sup>6</sup> mentions that the Itong had formerly had the hereditary right or obligation of providing eunuchs to the court of the Mogaung Sawbwa.

PHAKEAL (Phake, Faqueer) According to Hannay<sup>7</sup> this group entered Assam as a direct consequence of the subjugation of the Mogaung independent State by the Burmese in the 18th Century. Their chief Shew Ta Heng Khuen Meng was a prince of the blood of the Mogaung Sawbwaw family and their first settlement was called Moongkong Tat after their former home. (Moonkong - Mongkawng - Mogaung). Early maps show a number of Phakeal villages mixed in among the Singpho villages on the Byrbi Dihing River but according to Hannay there were by 1836 only 2 Phakeal settlements and fifty houses in all remaining; there having previously been some 150 houses. Hannay also mentions that they had previously owned lands

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1. Bernard; 136

2. Cochrane (1) 22.

Sao Sam Lon Mung and Hkun Sam Long may be taken as figures for the same individual Sao and Hkun are both honorific titles meaning "Prince"

3. Macgregor, 1, 173.

4. Sic. Khenung? = Kanung.

5. "Nankiu" Shan name for the Upper Mali Hka.

6. Hannay iii, 10.

7. Ibid 1.



on the Tarung River in the Hukawng Valley i.e., near Ningbyen.

Hannay mentions that the Phakeal settlement of Moongkong Tat was close "to the present Ningroo" (Singpho) village. Kawlu Ma Nawng<sup>1</sup> records that after a quarrel between "The Ningroo people and the Munggang Shans, both then living in Assam" The Munggang people moved to Ningbyen in the Hukawng Valley and settled under the Singpho chief Ningbyen Wongdu Nawng who later sent them down the Chindwin to Singkaling Hkamti. Their further adventures have been recorded by Grant Brown. Writing of the people of the village of Maukkalauk on the left bank of the Chindwin in latitude 25°-35' he says: "The people of this village now talk Kachin wear Kachin dress and are called Kachins. They have learnt Shan, however, and if the present processes continues will no doubt in time "become" Shans and eventually Burmans. When this has happened someone may perhaps discover that they are of Shan origin. Yet they are not even Kachins. Their headman says they came from the neighbourhood of Nengbyeng....in the north of the Hukawng Valley where they had settled for a time and adopted the Kachin language and customs, but they had arrived there when his father was a little boy from Assam where they wore white clothes and spoke some language which they have entirely forgotten...."

TARUNG (Towang, Turung, Darung). A group with a similar history to the Phakeal. According to Hanson<sup>2</sup> who regarded them as Kachins rather than Shans "the Darungs have a story that they were for generations held as slaves by the Darung (Tarung) River in the Hukong Valley, when the Shans ruled that country. Thus their dialect became largely a Shan patois and they lost many of their Kachin characteristics"

In Hanson's<sup>4</sup> time both the "Darungs and the Paqueers" spoke Singpho. Hannay<sup>3</sup> sixty years earlier had considered that the Phake, Khamjang, Itong and Towang were all merging into the Assamese. As we shall see presently both were probably right. There was no room for Shans in tea producing Assam and they necessarily either reverted to the hills or became Assamese.

1. Kawlu Ma Nawng. 32
2. Grant Brown 1, 19.
3. Hanson, 1, 204.
4. Ibid.
5. Hannay 111, 10.



**KHAMJANG.** Kamjang are mentioned in Assam Histories of the 15th Century along with the Aitonis and Panl Nora as having endeavoured to transfer their allegiance away from the Ahoms to that of the Shan ruler of Nora - i.e., Mogaung. According to Hannay<sup>2</sup> they numbered only about 100 houses and had formerly resided near the Nonyang Lake on the summit of the Patkoi Range where they had had special duties as guardians of the Pangsau Pass.

**NORA** The name seems to have been the Assamese term for the old Mogaung State. According to Hannay<sup>2</sup> the Nora mentioned by Buchanan included the Phake, Khamjang and Itong already listed.

**KHAMPTI** (Khamti, Khamptee etc.) The Assam spelling of what is written in Burma as Khamti. Strictly speaking the term Khampti in Assam should have been applied only to those groups of Shans who were direct and recent colonists from Khamti Long in Burma and in some cases the term is thus used. Fortunately however the Khampti achieved for a while considerable political prominence and during this period of ascendancy all other Shan groups tended to cohere to the Khampti group. In official jargon, census returns etc. Khampti gradually became synonymous with "Shans of Assam".

<sup>6</sup>  
**MULLUCK** A somewhat mysterious group who were evidently hereditary followers of the Khamti (Khampti) chiefs, though the extent to which they were "shans" is perhaps open to dispute. Wilcox<sup>7</sup> met them in the Putao Area and reported "the Muluks are a distinct tribe and their language has no affinity with that of any other neighbouring tribe. This appears very

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1. Mackenzie (1) 540.
  2. Hannay 111.9.
  3. It thus corresponds to the Pong or Bong of the Burmese and Manipur.
  4. Hannay 111.10; Buchanan (1) 563.
  5. Mackenzie (1) 540 states that "the name Khamti appears as the appellation of one of the rulers of the Ahom Kingdom towards the end of the 14th Century." The word is probably a lineage name in the Maw than dynasty of Mogaung and thus crops up in all colonies of that State.
  6. In no way connected with the Mulluck though Malcolm (1) II, 205, seems to confuse the two as he writes of the latter as occupying "a region rendered cold by its elevation."
  7. Wilcox (1) 431.



remarkable as their number is only reckoned as 500 houses." They crop up frequently in the Assam literature always as close adherents of the Khampti chiefs. Robinson<sup>1</sup> has a story that "in former times they were an independent people inhabiting the plains of Mupong on the Dihing River south of the Phungen pass. They declare that they were plundered and dispersed by the Singphos and that one half of their number were carried off and made dependent on these marauders while the other half fled towards the Irrawadi and placed themselves under the protection of the Khamtis (i.e. Khamti)"

When Wilcox visited the Putao Area he found that the Mishmi inhabitants of Aleth the next village to that of the Mulluks had "been chiefly removed to the Tungen rivulet (on the Dihing) under the influence of the Singphos."<sup>2</sup> It is possible that the Mulluks were originally of some Mishmi stock but they certainly "became Shan" later on and are counted as Khampti in all the later official reports.

Some of the implications of this synopsis will be considered in detail later on but it is sufficient here to note firstly that all these various Shan groups in Assam had close links with the may Shan States of North Burma especially Khamti Long and Mogaung, and secondly that each of the groups concerned is very small. Assam Census figures are, if anything, even more peculiar than those of Burma but the total number of enumerated Shans has never exceeded 4000

Actual figures are

1872	1562 <sup>3</sup>	
1881	2083 <sup>{3}</sup>	
1911	3136 <sup>{4}</sup>	(Khampti 1868, Aiton 414, Nora 348)
1921	3947 <sup>{5}</sup>	" Phakesal 506)

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1. Robinson (1) 372.
  2. Wilcox (1) 429
  3. Mackenzie (1) 540.
  4. Census 1921. Census of India 1911. Assam pt. I. pp. 128/136
  5. Census 1921. Census of India 1921. Assam Pt. II. Tables p. 59
  - 6.

Since much of the Khampti and Singpho areas were unenumerated prior to 1921, it is probable that the total Shan population has remained stable or even decreased. But anyway the Assam Census authorities ideas of what constitutes a Shan are even more unorthodox than my own. The 1911 Census blandly describes the Singpho as "a Shan tribe of the Lakhimpur frontier".<sup>1</sup> The 1921 Census however gave 5276 Singpho speakers in contrast to the 3957 Khampti.<sup>2</sup> Various estimates from 1837 onwards indicate that the Singpho population has remained around the 6000 mark throughout the period under review.

#### Political Structure in Pre-British Eastern Assam.

It seems clear that these various Shan Colonist groups known by distinctive cultural labels were elements of an overall segmentary political structure such as has been described for the "Kachins" in Chapter 3. Each colonising segment was in the first place, in form, a nucleus village which in time grew by accretion into a full scale settlement, then into several settlements and finally, in the case of the Khampti, into a small state. This process is well brought out by the account of the Phakeal given above. They start in the Ningbyen area of the Hukawng as part of a politically dominant Shan group, then some of them move to Assam where they become subordinate to Kachins, some of this

1. Census 1911 op.cit. p. 134.

2. Census 1921 op.cit.



latter group then move back to Ningbyen where they are subordinate to Kachins and finally some of this Ningbyen group - now Kachin in culture - and move to Singkaling HKanti where they become subordinate to "Shans." On each occasion it is only a segment of the existing group which moves on to form a new colonising settlement elsewhere. In Hannay's time there were still some Phakeal of "Moengkoong Tat near Nungoo" though these numbers were reduced. The village is there still and is significantly marked on the map "HKanti and Singpho."<sup>1</sup> Norree<sup>2</sup> who visited Ningbyen in 1896 found it to consist of two parts one of which (the dominant though smaller section) he labelled Theimbaw (i.e., Singpho, Jinghpaw) and the other "Shan". In 1940 there were still "Shans" in Ningbyen subordinate to the "Kachin" chief though it is not clear how far the two groups differed culturally.<sup>3</sup> Both "Kachins" and "Shans" here are wet paddy cultivators.

Eastern Assam viewed as a whole was a shifting segmentary political structure of a similar type on a large scale. By no means all the component elements were labelled Ahom or Shan.

The Assam (Ahom) State appears to have been a feudal structure in which the hereditary rulers of provinces held hereditary offices of State at the centre and were deemed to be

1. Mengkeng on the Noa Dihing about 8 miles below Ningru & survey 1942 Edn. Assam/Burma 83M. Sadiya Ref NW 3541.
2. Norree. Under date 22 November. Ningbyen appears as "Nyingpyin" there were 20 Theimbaw houses and 30 Shan. He correctly states that "the Theimbaws of the village belong to the Marit (i.e., Marip) tribe.
3. Kaulu Ma Nawng (1) 42."

the direct descendants of the original "companions" of the founder ancestor of the Ahom dynasty. This fiction however did not deter the provincial ruler usurping from time to time the paramount authority at the Centre, either by setting themselves up as "Rajah" or else by functioning as an all powerful power-behind-the-throne.<sup>1</sup>

The two provinces which concern us here were Muttuck and Sadiya.

Muttuck. As a political division Muttuck in 1810 corresponded broadly speaking to the modern administrative district of Lakhimpur, that is to say it included the whole of the area south of Brahmaputra between the Disang and Noa Dihing rivers. Its capital was near Rungagora north of modern Tinsukia and in the centre of an important tea producing area.<sup>2</sup> Since Muttuck territory theoretically included the whole of the Burhi Dihing river as far east as its junction with the Noa Dihing all the Kachins, Nagas, and Shans living in the northern foothills of the Patkai Range were nominally Muttuck subjects.

Muttuck province was also known as Mooran (Morung etc).

The inhabitants of Muttuck were certainly "Assamese"; that is to say a mixture of various Shan, Miao, Kachin, Naga,

1. For contemporary descriptions of the formal structure of the Ahom State see Buchanan (1) 600/623 and Welch(1)

2. Butler (1) 106.



and Kachai elements, though in theory there was a "Muttuck" Tribe" which had held land rights in the area since before the arrival of the Ahom in the 13th Century.<sup>1</sup>

The Muttuck ruler - the Morung Khawa Gohain - was hereditarily a member of the family of the <sup>Burha</sup> Bura Gohain, one of the three great officers of state in the Ahom Kingdom.<sup>2</sup>

Hereditarily too he appears to have been in religious opposition to the Ahom Kings. The very earliest Assam legends interpret the shifting fortunes of social dynasties as opposition between Krishna and Siva sects.<sup>3</sup> In the 18th Century the Muttucks, who represented a rival political force to the Ahom, appear as a Krishna (Vishnu) worshipping sect in opposition to the Durga (Siva) worshipping sects patronised by the Ahom.<sup>4</sup>

As a people, in the literature, the Muttucks often appear as Moa Museya (Moamaria etc) a name associated apparently with their sectarian affiliation.<sup>5</sup>

During the latter half of the 18th Century the forces of opposition within the structure of the Ahom State were markedly more prominent than the forces of integration "Insurrections" were constant, and both in 1769 and again in 1784 the Muttuck chiefs succeeded for a while in achieving

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1. Butler (1) 91.

2. Buchanan (1) 623.

3. Enclopaedia Britannica 14th Edn. Article Assam p.552.

4. Butler (1) 91/2

Mackenzie (1) 73.

According to Mackenzie the "Upper Nine Families" of "Moamariahs" claimed descent from the original "Muttuck" tribe, the Lower Nine Families were proselytised Ahom.

5. Butler (1) 92



full political power at the centre.<sup>1</sup>

On the second occasion the British used this <sup>userpation</sup> ~~new~~ ~~portion~~ as an excuse for intervening on behalf of the "rightful claimant."

In 1792 a small British force under a Captain Welsh entered Assam in support of <sup>Gaurinath</sup> ~~Gaurinath~~ Singh the Ahom rajah who had been deposed by the Muttucks. Welsh suppressed the Muttucks with ease and advocated the permanent garrisoning of Assam with British troops. However two years later to the chagrin of the Imperialists a change of policy in Calcutta led to Welsh's withdrawal.<sup>2</sup> Direct British intervention then ceased for 2 years.

Though the Muttuck rulers Ahom title was Norung Khawa Gohain he also appears in the British literature as "Bot Senaputtee" (Bursenaputtee) also a title of Assamese origin.<sup>3</sup> Another title in colloquial use was Muttuck Gohain<sup>4</sup> which Kachin tradition has corrupted into Madawk Gawkhai, the "ruler of Assam."<sup>5</sup> The identity between the Bot Senaputtee and the Madawk Gawkhai is shown by the fact that Kawlu Ma Nawng's story of Lakang Hkyeng <sup>Tu's</sup> ~~Tia's~~ plot against the Madawk Gawkhai and his consequent feud against <sup>Daipha</sup> ~~Daipha~~ Gam is

1. Butler (1) 92/101.

2. Robinson (11) 172.

3. It appears also in Manipur see Hodson (11)

4. Gohain in the Ahom order meant "Chief officer of State"; there were three Gohain at the centre, and three or perhaps more Gohain who were in practice provincial governors.

5. Kawlu Ma Nawng (1) 33.



duplicated item by item in Butler's story of Likhee Khandoo's plot against the Bursensaputtee and his consequent feud against the Duffa Gam.<sup>1</sup>

Sadiya. Under the Ahoms the province of Sadiya seems to have included most of what is now the Sadiya Frontier Tract; that is to say the region lying to the north east of the Mee Dihing and south of the Lohit, and also, further north, the Mishmi and Miri country lying between the Lohit on the east and the Dihang on the west.

In 1830, as now, it was thinly populated though the writers of that period attributed this sparsity to recent depredations by the Kachins

"This District (Sadiya) is also tributary to Asam and properly a part of it but is now nearly laid waste and inhabited principally by refugees, Khamptis and Muluks driven by the Singphos from their original seats to the south east. It is governed by a Khampti Prince, who has assumed the Assamese title of Sadiya Khowa Gohain claiming the same descent from the God Indra with the Rajas of Asam, the Chiefs of the Howamaris, Shans etc.....The Khamptis of Sadiya and its neighbourhood emigrated towards the plains now occupied by the Singphos....within the last half century."<sup>2</sup>

The circumstances of the insurrection whereby the Khampti achieved the dominant position at Sadiya are obscure. They appear to have first become prominent in the area about 1785 during the Muttuck insurrection but they only consolidated their position shortly before the arrival of the British in 1824.<sup>3</sup> The contemporary Ahom official history does not ring

1. Kawlu Ma Nawng (1) 35. Butler (1) 66.

2. Neuville (1) 337.

3. Butler (1) 40; Buchannan (1) 623.



entirely true.

In 18th century (i.e. in 1797 A.D.) one thousand Bora siringias revolted in Sadiya. The Khamti Bura Raja, Pani Moras, Fakals, Miris, Michals, Muluks, Tekella Nagas, and Abors joined with them. They assembled together and speared to death the Sadiya Khawa Gohain and took away his wives and children... our men captured the Khamti Bura Raja and a large number of Moras, Fakals and Muluks.....Sometime after the King and the Bura Gohain considered the case of the captives and decided that they should not be beheaded but they should be re-established... In the same year one of the family of Kuaigayan Bura Gohain was made Sadiya Khawa Gohain.<sup>1</sup>

Butler asserts that up to the time of this revolt the total Khampti settlement in Assam was merely a single village of some 15 houses, situated on the Tenga Pani River, but that for the seizure of Sadiya they were "joined by another band of 400 Khamptis with some few muskets."<sup>2</sup>

What is certain is that "the true Khampti" (by which I mean those families with direct lineage associations with the rulers of Khamti Long in Burma) were only a small minority in the population of Sadiya province as a whole. The rest of the population was made up of "Assamese" - both gentry and slave class -, Shans of various types, and hill people - especially Mishmi.

The number of Kachins in the area is obscure. By 1830 most of the Upper Tenga Pani river valley was inhabited by groups whom the English writers refer to as Kachuk Singpho as

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1. Burma (1) paras 351/2.  
2. Butler (1) 40.



as distinct from the Kachins further south on the Burhi Dihing River who were rated as Taasen Singphos. According to Hannay and Dalton these Khakhu included "Lessoo(?Lisu) from the China border."<sup>1</sup> A map of the area dated 1880 shows villages named Kanung, Ulieng or Durleng (Duleng), Munglang.<sup>2</sup> This suggests that the "Kachins" of this area were of the same lineage groups as the hill peoples bordering on to the Khamti Long state in Burma. It certainly was not true that the Khampti who seized Sadiya had been "driven out" of the Tenga Panl area by the Kachins (Singphos), for they retained their rights in the area. When the Khampti chiefs were ejected from Sadiya by the British in 1839, the most important of them moved back into the Tenga Panl area to locations which they still occupy today.<sup>3</sup>

The most reasonable inference seems to be that before their seizure of Sadiya the status of the Khampti chiefs in the Tenga Panl area was that of mung duwa in the sense described in Chapter 3, but while the "core lineage" was Khampti the accretionary lineages included many other groups such as Nora, Phakeal, Lessoo, Kanung, Duleng etc.

Also even from the beginning the Khampti seem to have had great influence over the Mishmis to the north east of Sadiya, an influence which they continued to exert at

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1. Hannay (11)7.

2. Map. Province of Assam with adjacent hills (1880)  
1" = 8 miles (British Museum).

3. Notably Chonkham.

least until 1870.<sup>1</sup>

In the consolidation of the petty state of Sadiya however a rather different structure seems to have emerged. Here the basis of authority was a class system in which "Khampti" in a broad sense were lords over the "Assamese". Butler estimated that in 1829 the Sadiya population (excluding Mishmi and Kachins) amounted to 5228 Assamese and 2704 Khampti.<sup>2</sup> Pemberton on the basis of figures supplied by Bruce about 1832 lists the class composition of 1520 houses from Sadiya township which show the Shan groups as totalling less than a third of the whole.<sup>3</sup> I have altered the spelling to correspond to that already used in this Chapter

		Houses	
(Tai Speaking Groups)	Khampti	350	
	Khamjang	20	
	Aijonia	20	
	Shan	5	
		<u>5</u>	395
(Assamese-upper class)	Ahom	500	
	Hatti		
	Mureya	70	
	Mureya	10	
	Muttuck	<u>40</u>	620
(Assamese-lower class)	Kachari	150	
	Dom	50	
	"Jheele"	50	
	"Kussen"	12	
	"Choteeah"	3	
	"Beheeah"	50	
	Dumuck Mire	50	
	Biringia Mire	60	
	Chammuah Mire	<u>50</u>	425
	Mishmi	50	
(Hill People)	Naga	<u>30</u>	80
			<u>1520</u>

1. c.f. Gregory (1) The "native envoy" in question was the Khampti Chief Chowsam Gohain then living at Chenkham.

2. Butler (1) 45.

3. Pemberton (1) Tables.



The Tai speaking groups in this list were at this stage all Buddhist, the Assamese were in the main Hindus of rival sects, and varied castes.<sup>1</sup>

The relationship of the Assamese to their "Khampti" masters was classed by the British writers of the 1830 period as slavery. The Khampti themselves have a word lok-hka which they apply to all such serf class groups. Barnard has translated this term as "slave."

Bearing in mind that "Slavery" is in general to be interpreted as "bond-slavery" that is as a voluntary species of dependence with an economic basis, it is interesting to note the steps which the Khampti Chiefs took to build up their power at the centre. Some of their "slave dependents" they acquired from their predecessors, others by "holding out an asylum to refugees" and still others by appropriating the Miri dependents of neighbour Abor Chiefs in the hills to the north west. Two quotations are relevant. The first is from McCosh:

"availing themselves of the civil war then raging throughout Assam, (the Khamtis) took the forcible possession of the country they now enjoy ejecting the reigning chieftain Buddia Gowa Gohain; and the Khamti chief usurping his name and jurisdiction reduced his subjects to dependence or slavery. The Khamtis by a vigorous mode of Government and holding out an asylum to refugees from other states soon rose to eminence."<sup>2</sup>

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1. By 1881 the commoner adherents of the Khampti had a dual religion, "the common people worship both Kodoma (Kontama) and the Hindu Goddess Debi or Durga"
  2. Barnard (1) 139.
  3. McCosh (1) 145.



In the height of their success, prompted by the weakness of the Assam Government, the Khamtees commenced kidnapping the Meroes, and other inhabitants settled in the neighbourhood of the Dehong and Debong rivers, whom the Abors looked upon as their dependants and slaves, entitled to their special protection. This treatment being less endurable than that of the Abors towards whom a friendly feeling had been created by long intercourse, the Meroes were induced to implore the protection of the latter to save them from being cruelly taken away from their homes to serve as slaves among a strange tribe."<sup>1</sup>

It will be observed that if we consider the effects of this procedure upon the "slaves" rather than upon the "masters", these several methods of accepting Shan dominance are to be regarded as variant processes of "transculturation." ~~In accepting shan dominance are to be regarded as variant processes of "transculturation".~~ In accepting the status of "slaves" to the Khamptis, the Miris, Kacharis and the rest take an initial step towards "becoming Shans". The Miri indeed are normally an intermediate group between hills and plains on the Abor frontier; a shift of emphasis in one direction turns them into Abors, a shift in the other into "Khampti".

No Kachins are mentioned in Pemberton's Sadiya house list but they are specified in other settlements.

Pemberton also gives figures for the village of one of the minor Khampti leaders the Degelah Gohain. It consisted of 160 houses - Khampti 120, Muttuck 20, Singpho 20.

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1. Butler (1) 40/41.



Deerah (the modern Dirak) likewise has 110 houses - Khampti 70, Singpho 5, Docaneeah 20, Mattuck 4, Kachari 17 Mashmi 1.<sup>1</sup> The Docaneeah were a slave category of Singpho as will be explained presently.

The lack of any sign of cultural homogeneity in any of these settlements is very marked.

On the basis of a fully documented Kachin tradition which I shall quote in a moment it seems legitimate to elaborate a tentative historical reconstruction from this evidence.

It is probable that the Khampti as original colonists from the Nkamti long are first established themselves in the Tenga Pani area with the active assistance of their Kachin, Nung and Lisu adherents, who were also their kinsfolk. In the process they established a political dominion over the Mishmi settlements to the north east and attracted to themselves as allies the various other Shan groups already settled in the vicinity of the Noa Dihing river. So far the "mechanics" of the struture were based on kinship. But after establishing themselves in a position of authority at Sadiya the development took a more specifically feudal form; the master-serf relationship replacing the relatively equalitarian kinship bond.

The Kachin tradition referred to is given at length by Kawlu Ma Nawng.<sup>2</sup> It explains the joint arrival of the Khampti

1. Pemberton (1) Tables.

2. Kawlu Ma Nawng (1) 13.



and the Singpho in Assam and their conquest of the Mishmi

"After this the descendants of Jihkawp Tang went over to Assam by way of the Putao Plains and the Chyankan pass. They were the following sub-tribes -

- 1) Gumsheh Daipha (Gasheng)
- 2) Pyisa.
- 3) Hkamti Shan Namsun Wa.

Hkamti Shan Namsun Wa and Gasheng Wa joined forces and on their way to Assam past Mkitmung hill fought with the Hkumman people at the upper reaches of the Tayun River. After they had defeated the Hkumman people Namsun Wa and Gasheng Wa inflicted a yearly due of ten baskets of paddy from each household of the Hkumman tribe, of these ten baskets the Shan Namsun was to get six and the Gasheng Wa four. After the subjugation of the Hkumman people the Gasheng Wa became dissatisfied with his share of four baskets and demanded more; the Shan refused to allow him more so the two parted. The Shan left for Assam and the Gasheng Wa remained at the Tayun River. After the Shan's departure the Hkumman people utterly refused to pay this paddy due; they hit the Gasheng Wa over the head with a tobacco pipe and by this insult indicated that he had become merely as the dust that is thrown away after the smoke has finished the tobacco in his pipe; as he had been thus robbed of all prestige the Gasheng Wa could no longer remain in the Tayun country and so followed the Namsun Wa to Assam living under the Assamese. The Lahpai people with Pyisa followed these two into the Tayun River country and fought with the Hkumman people; they failed to defeat the Hkumman people but remained in the country."

In this passage the Tayun River is the Dihing or Diyun.

Kachins sometimes use the term Hkumman as descriptive of people we would call "eastern Nagas"<sup>1</sup> but the locality of

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1. Kawlu Ma Nawng as translated by Leyden makes the pre-Kachin inhabitants of the Nukawng consist of (a) Hkawseng Shans and (b) Hkumawng Hkumman Nagas. Barnard from traditions collected in Putao lists Hkamawng and Hkaman among the fabulous pre-Shan inhabitants of the Putao plain. Modern Mishmi are definitely labelled Hkumman or Hkman by the Northern Shans and Kachins  
Kawlu Ma Nawng (1) 15; Barnard (1) 137; Bennison (1)



the Upper Dihing rather suggests Mishmis.

All in all the story provides a good mythical "explanation" for the fact that the Khampti were definitely overlords of the neighbouring Mishmis while the Singpho were not. It also to some extent explains the mutual relationship of the Khamptis with the various Kachin groups in their vicinity. There were three such groups. The first were the immediate dependants of the "Hkamti Shan Namsua Wa"; they appear on the ground as the Kachins of the Tenga-Pani River area under lineage and tribal names Hkahku, Lessoo, Kanung, Durleng, Luttera (Lahtaw ka?), Tangeang Tang, etc.

The second were the lineage descendants of Gasheng Wa the ancestor of the "Gumshen-Daipha sub tribe." They appear on the ground, under the names Gakhen and Buiffa, as the Kachins resident in the plains and foothills near the point where the Dihing (Tayun) runs out into the Assam plain. Tradition gives them a remote but nevertheless definite alliance with the Khampti in a position of slight inferiority - "four baskets against six. It also places them "under the Assamese", which for the purposes of Kawlu Ma Nawng's story means under "Madawk Gashkal", (Muttuck Gohain) the Bor Senaputtee of Muttuck

The third group the Pyisa are in the tradition distinct in that there is in their case no suggestion of a traditional alliance with the Khampti. On the ground they appear as the Beesa, occupying the country along the Burhi Dihing from the



mouth of the Namhpuk westwards as far as Margherita and also to some extent north west along the Noa Dihing. ==

In the historical events of 1825-1825 this alignment of alliances held good. The Khampti and the Tengapani Kachins always co-operated; the Khampti and the Duffa group usually co-operated and never seriously opposed one another; the Bessa were consistently opposed to the Duffa and usually opposed to the Khampti.

Moreover Kawlu Ma Nawng's 20th Century myth is not just a reflection of these 19th Century events; the same oppositions and alliances, cutting across the "cultural" boundaries of Shan and Kachin were already traditionally established in the 1830s. The feud between the Bessa and the Duffa is constantly referred to in the literature of the 1830s and its cause is described by Butler in a tale that is almost identical to that given by Kawlu Ma Nawng.<sup>1</sup> On the otherhand the co-operation between Khampti and Singpho in pre-British times is confirmed by Butler from Assamese sources. According to these records the Khampti after their an initial seizure of Sadiya were for a number of years in conflict either with the Ahoms or else with one or other of the rival aspirants to the Ahom throne; in at least one of these campaigns Butler particularly mentioned the combined action of Khampti and Singpho and the combination may be taken as normal.

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1. See above p note 4.

# See map 3 note



Summary of Historical Events 1818 to 1844.

We have now filled in the political background in almost sufficient detail to permit an examination of the local Kachin organization. However before tackling this it will be as well to give a brief chronological history over the critical period of our observation as seen through British eyes.

About 1810 there was a dispute in the succession to the Ahom throne which result in 1817 in the pretender Poorunder Singh ousting the established Rajah Chunderkant Singh.<sup>1</sup> The Burmese then intervened and sent a substantial army into Assam and replaced Chunderkant Singh on the throne. Poorunder Singh fled to British territory and enlisted the aid of a British trader - R. Bruce -. The latter, presumably with the tacit approval of "the Company" equipped a native army which he himself led into battle to conquer Assam. He was unsuccessful and was taken prisoner. Unabashed Bruce changed sides and began plotting with Chunderkant Singh against the Burmese.<sup>2</sup> In 1821/22 the Burmese sent a large army into Assam under the Bandoola ousted Chunderkant Singh and placed on the throne Jogessur Singh, who was a younger brother of an Assamese queen at the <sup>Burmese</sup> ~~Ava~~ court, and had been brought up in Ava. In effect Assam became for the time being a Burmese province. Chunderkant and Bruce escaped to India.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Robinson (1) 172. Butler (1) 147.
  2. Bayfield (11) XXXVII/XXXVIII.
  3. McCosh (1) 19.
  4. Scott (11) 192.

Conflict with the British was now inevitable indeed the Burmese seem to have invited it by putting forward demands for the surrender of Chunderkent. War was declared in March 1824 and the British immediately occupied Assam, easily defeating the Burmese garrison. The British commanders then planned rather optimistically to invade Burma overland by way of the Mwakang Valley; this accounts for the considerable interests and activity in the Singpho-Kachin area in the period 1825/6.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout this period of rapidly changing political fortunes the Khampti Chiefs of Sadiya and the Muttuck Chiefs of Mungagora seem to have managed to keep in with all competing parties. In 1825 the remnants of the Burmese army seeking to cover their retreat withdrew on to the villages of the Singpho Beesa and Duffa chiefs. The Khampti and Muttuck Chiefs then astutely complained to the British that they were being attacked by an army of 7,500 Singpho Kachins.<sup>2</sup> As a consequence of this the Muttuck and Sadiya chiefs were confirmed in their rights and titles<sup>3</sup>, but the Singpho Kachin villages were raided by the British and deprived of their "slaves". Neufville on this one expedition alone claimed to have released over 6,000.<sup>4</sup>

The British ignored any possible political relationship between the Singpho and the Khampti or Muttuck, and appointed

1. Wilcox (1) 316.
2. Mackenzie (1) 62
3. Butler (1) 43, 103.
4. Mackenzie (1) 64



the Beesa chief to be a paramount responsible for all Singpho affairs and general intermediary between the Singpho and the Government.<sup>1</sup> This experiment in indirect rule did not work.

Bruce had heard of the existence of tea in the Singpho area as early as 1820<sup>2</sup> but serious official interest in the matter was not taken until about 1832. Even then Calcutta had not appreciated the possibilities and in 1833 with a view to administrative economy installed Poorunder Singh as Rajah of Upper Assam.

In 1835 a feud between rival Singpho chiefs - of Beesa and Duffa - led to friction with the Burmese which in turn resulted in several exploration journeys between Assam and Ava.<sup>3</sup>

But now however the possibilities of tea came to the fore. Poorunder Singh was removed as inefficient in 1835.<sup>4</sup> In 1838 on the thinnest of pretexts the Sadiya chief was deprived of his titles, this and other forms of political pressure - e.g., the threat of taxation - led to a Khampti revolt in 1839.<sup>5</sup> This of course led to the ruthless expulsion of the Khampti from Sadiya. In August 1839 the Political Agent made a preposterous proposal to the Muttuck Bor Senaputtee that he should share his territory with a relative who had certain

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1. Mackenzie

2. From the Singpho Chief Beesa Gam. Anon (1)21.

3. Hannay(1); Bayfield(1), Griffiths(1)

4. Butler (1) 147.

5. Mackenzie (1) 53.

Butler (1) 46/47.

claims; the Bor Benaputtee refused and was instantly dismissed.<sup>1</sup>

This fitted in admirably with the much boosted launching in London of the Assam Company<sup>2</sup> with an initial grant of 70,000 acres carved out of what had previously been recognised as Muttuck and Singpho land. The Singpho staged a revolt in 1843 and suffered drastic reprisals<sup>3</sup>; so drastic that when Dalton<sup>4</sup> attempted a census in 1853 he found that many of the most important settlements had packed up and withdrawn to the Mukawng Valley.

Thereafter in the rapid expansion of the tea industry Khampti and Singpho cease to be of any importance and almost disappear from the records.<sup>5</sup>

But for the early years the record is remarkably full; indeed for the period prior to 1845 the Singpho and the Khampti between them receive considerably more space than all the other hill tribes put together. Some of the reasons for this have been noted above.

Firstly there was the interest, both military and commercial, in routes to Burma and China, either by way of the Mukawng Valley and Mogaung or else by the Dihing Valley and Khamti Long (Putao). Both these routes lay directly through

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1. Butler (1) 106.

2. Anon (1), (11), (1v).

3. Butler (1) 75. Mackenzie (1) 69.

4. Dalton (1)

5. In modern reports they seldom merit more than half a line e.g. Annual Report of the Frontier Tribes of Assam for the year 1937-38. Para 5. "Khampti and Singphos had a good year."



Singpho territory. Moreover even after 1825 British political relations with Burma remained somewhat strained and there was always the fear that the Burmese might make some sort of military attempt to regain their position in Assam.<sup>1</sup> Since the only feasible route by which a Burmese raiding party could be expected to reach Assam was by way of the Mukawng, the Singphos came to be regarded as a sort of "buffer state", certain of their chiefs being subsidised with arms and money with a view to their providing a frontier intelligence service.<sup>2</sup> There were evidently divided opinions as to how far the Singphos could be trusted to fulfil this role, but certainly up to 1838 the actual policy adopted towards the Singpho chiefs was very conciliatory. Probably the Administration had no choice. Until the possibilities of tea development made expenditure worth while. Upper Assam was an administrative liability. Administration was definitely "on the cheap."<sup>3</sup> So long as the Bursenaputtee and the Sadiya Khawa Gohain were

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1. Butler (1) 73/76. The appointment of the Tipam Rajah to an official position in Mogaung caused grave apprehension in Assam. Butler asserts that he was "Governor" of Mogaung but this is a mistake. At the time of Hannay and Bayfield's visit he was myo-sa, not myo-wun. The Tipam Rajah claimed the Assamese throne by virtue of the fact that he was brother to Jegessur Singh who immediately before the British annexation had been Rajah for a short while as a puppet of the Burmese. (Butler (1) 74; McCosh (1) 19.
  2. McCosh (1) 151; Mackenzie (1), 63.
  3. Butler (1) 33, 34 computes the annual expenditure of the civil and military Administration in Assam at Rs700,000; he estimates revenue at about Rs 600,000.



both retained as puppet rulers, the role of the small party of British Officers at Sadiya seems to have been to display the military might of the Company by bluff rather than by action. Besides which there was the perennial problem that troops trained in orthodox European methods of fighting find themselves at a hopeless disadvantage in the jungle. The following complaint of 1846 might well have been uttered by any Colonel in the Burma Rifles in 1942:<sup>1</sup>

The Assam Light Infantry wish for nothing better than an opportunity of contending with the Singphos, or indeed any other of their treacherous neighbours (whom they hold in the utmost contempt) in a fair battle in the open country; but in the jungles they find it almost impossible to come into contact with their foes"

The British then were interested in the Singphos because they were interested in the routes that passed through their country; they respected the Singphos because militarily speaking they were not in a position to repress them. From these circumstances they acquired an unnatural glamour.

They were credited with the ability of putting a force of 7,500 men in the field. Mc Cosh<sup>2</sup> regarded them as "by far the most powerful and formidable "of all the hill tribes of Assam, though it is reasonably certain that the total Singpho

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1. Butler (1) 12.

2. Mc Cosh (1) 149.



population in the whole Assam area did not exceed 6000<sup>1</sup> - apart that is from their Assamese "slave class" dependents known as the Docaneahs. This exaggeration need not surprise us. Anyone familiar with the eccentricities of rumour under conditions of jungle warfare will be aware of the ease with which one man can be converted into a powerful and aggressive army!

Quite apart from the political and military importance which the Singpho and Khampti acquired through their territorial situation, the former acquired a special importance through the chance fact that the indigenous tea plant of Assam, which grew wild throughout Muttuck, was at first thought to exist only in Singpho territory.

Robert Bruce, whose ambiguous political activities have already been mentioned, met the Bessa chief at the court of Chunderkant about 1820<sup>2</sup> and learnt from him of the existence of tea in his area. Later after the British occupation a brother of Robert Bruce, - C.A. Bruce - held the post of "Commander of Gunboats" and general commercial

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1. Butler (1) 60. The original source is a report by Col A White Commandant at Sadiya which is untraceable at the India Office. A.J. Moffatt Mills (1) Pt. 1. p. 54 mentions a report by Col White dated 28 July 1837, and Dalton (1) p. lxxxiv mentioned the "report by Lt. Col. A. White submitted Government with Major Jenkins letter No. 36 of the 28th May 1838." One or other of these is probably Butler's source. The figure is plausible; Mackenzie (1) 71 gives the 1871 census total as 3435, but it is known that numerous lineage groups retired from the Assam area to the Mukaung after the events of 1843, (See Dalton (1).)
2. Anon (1) 21; Robinson (1) 136 both say 1823 but Bayfield (11) says Bruce was in Assam in 1820.



factotum for the Company at Sadiya. He seems to have had close and friendly relations with the Singpho chiefs, particularly Beesa and Mingroo, - and while in 1835 the Government experts were still arguing as to whether the plant discovered in Assam really was "tea",<sup>1</sup> Bruce had persuaded the Mingroo chief to launch out into active cultivation.<sup>2</sup> The first tea crop ever produced commercially in Assam came from an entirely Kachin tea garden!

It was probably the Bruces' who introduced the Beesa chief to Scott and Neufville, the political and military advisers in Assam in 1825,<sup>3</sup> which would account for the fact that it was this chief that was appointed "paramount." I have already mentioned that the Beesa and Duffa chiefs were at feud and that the latter rather than the former were in alliance with the Sadiya Khampti chiefs. The appointment of the Beesa chief as "paramount" inevitably accentuated this feud antagonism and all the "trouble" experienced by the

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1. Parliamentary Papers (1); Griffiths (1). The tea eventually developed in Assam seems to have been a hybrid of Chinese and local varieties.
  2. Mackenzie (1) 68; Robinson (1) 145.
  3. Neufville was first political agent Sadiya; David Scott was first agent general for all Assam. Both men died in 1831. Scott was followed by T.C. Roberts who in turn was followed by Capt. F. Jenkins in Jan. 1834. Jenkins inaugurated the policy of exploitation in the interests of British capital, the earlier regime of Scott and Neufville was remarkably enlightened. See Mackenzie (1) 5.



British with the Singpho between 1825 and 1845 was in one way or another a reflection of this feud. Seeing that the British were backing the Beesa chief, the Duffa chief who had at first shown himself willingly to come to terms with the British<sup>1</sup>, went over to the Burmese and with his headquarters in the Mukaung carried on a perpetual harrassing warfare against his hereditary enemy.

We can now proceed to our task of analysing the structure of Singpho-Kachin organisation as it was at the time of our "zero point" 1820.

#### Singpho Kinship and Political Structure.

We have already noted the existence of three groups of "Singpho" in Assam; the "Mlahku" group subordinate to the Khampti and resident in the Tengpa Pahl River area; the Gasheng-Dalpa (Gakhen-Duffa) group living in the area where Dihing (Tayun) runs out into the plains and divides into Noa Dihing and Burhi Dihing branches; and finally the Pyisa (Beesa) group living generally speaking along the Burhi Dihing River to the west of the Gasheng-Dalpa group.

The Gasheng-Dalpa and Pyisa groups were both part of the Tsasen "clan" whose main territorial area was then as it is now in the Mukaung Valley. Kawlu Ma Nung's account of the traditions of the Mukaung Valley Kachins thus

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1. Mackenzie (1) 63.

provides lavish material for reconstructing the putative kinship links between the various Singpho lineages which we encounter in the Assam literature of a century ago.

I say putative in order to stress that what matters is the relation in which these various lineages hold themselves to be, rather than their actual historical genealogical descent. Since there is no possible means of ascertaining the latter, the distinction is academic, but the point is of importance for my general thesis. When two groups of contrasted culture place themselves in putative kinship relation, the conventional anthropological reaction is to stress the putative character of this relationship and thus imply that it is different from kinship relations between lineages within the same culture group. But this contrast is fictitious. At the level of lineage linkage rather than local family, all kinship links are putative, and are equally "true" whether the groups thus linked are of the same or different "cultures."

According to Kawlu Ma Nawng the Tsasen Clan have all a common ancestor in Tsasen Wa Tu Sen the fourth son of Wahkyet Singgawng (Wahkyet Wa Ma Gam)<sup>1</sup> the common ancestor of the Marip, Lahtaw, Lahpai, Maran and certain other Jinghpaw clans. They are divided into two main "branches" -

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1. Kawlu Ma Nawng (1) 2.



gumlao and gumsa. Kawlu Ma Nawng gives at considerable length the mythical origin of this division and it is a story of considerable interest. Kawlu Ma Nawng's researches were compiled by synthesising the stories of a number of wise old men in the valley<sup>1</sup> and it is possible that his version of Tsasen origins includes both a gumlao and a gumsa version.

It will be remembered that in Chapter 3 we concluded that the ritual contrast between the gumsa and gumlao systems tended to become a focal point for latent political oppositions - so that political oppositions were constantly expressed in the form of a gumsa gumlao <sup>feud</sup> kind.<sup>2</sup> Thus a synthetic account of gumsa and gumlao versions of the same story tends to obscure their latent opposition.

In Kawlu Ma Nawng's account there were two Tsasen brothers Jinghkawp Tu and Jinghkawp Tang. Jinghkawp Tu had two sons one of whom married a woman of the N'Bawn-Tsasen sub-clan named N'Bawn Htinghkrap and then died. The widow was then "collected" by Npha La Grawng the younger brother who then had two further children N'Dup Gam Gran and N'Dup Nawng Dai Gawng (La N'Hawng Gumsa Wa Daigang) who became

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1. Ibid Introduction.

2. c.f. the Vishau/Diva opposition in Assam noted above.

the ancestors of the N'Dup Dumsa <sup>the</sup> and principal gumlae sub-clan. "The descendants of these children were treated as inferiors by the descendants of the children born from the first marriage on the grounds that they were only children born of a "collected" widow."<sup>1</sup> The descendants of the elder brother and of Jinghkawp Tang on the other hand formed the gumsa branch and of these the descendants of Jinghkawp Tang, formed the main gumsa sub-clan Tangai. The story then goes on to explain at length how the gumlae received authority from the nats to revolt against their gumsa overlords and of the wars that resulted.

Interpolated in this latter part of the story is what appears to be an alternative version of N'Dup Dumsa origins. In this second version<sup>2</sup> a descendant of Jinghkawp Tu named Shatan Wa is betrothed to a girl from the Tangai house of Jinghkawp Tang named Tangai Ma Ja In; the marriage is delayed and Tangai Ma Ja In has an illegitimate child by a male of the N'Bawn Sub-clan N'Bawn Laja Yawng. This child is then swallowed by the alligator of the Mkitwang mountain and the mother calls in the assistance of a nat priest Dumsa La Bawn to rescue the child. He at first appeals to Mushe (i.e. Mu Sheng the mu nat of the commoners<sup>3</sup>) but Mushe replies

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1. Kawlu Ma Nawng (1) 10, 20.

2. Ibid 11.

3. Mu nats - See Chapter 3. The mu nats worshipped by commoners in the Sinpaw are usually Mu Sheng and Bungpui. Hanson(1) says both are female and that Bungpui is the companion (manang) of Mu Sheng. I was told that the latter is male and that the former is his daughter. Gilhodes, (1) 5 makes Mu



that he must make an offering to a superior mu nat named Sinlap.<sup>1</sup> Mushe then takes the priest up into heaven where he makes a direct sacrifice to Sinlap and there learns of the division among the mu nats between gunlao and gumsa. He then returns to earth and leads the revolt against the gumsa chiefs, by refusing to contribute thighs, refusing to contribute labour to the chief's field, and refusing to carry out ritual functions at the chief's funeral.

Here it will be noted that a story of divine birth and theocratic initiative is grafted on to the other tale which makes the N'Dup Dumsa people the low born descendants of union between the N'Bawn and Jinghkawp branches. It emphasises strongly what was said in Chapter 3 that the contrast between gunlao and gumsa is one of ritual rather than basic structure.

Careful reading of Kawlu Ma Nawng's story makes it possible to organise all the named lineages of the Tsamen

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(Note 3 Continued from page 415) Sheng male and identical to Makam Wa Ningsang; Bayfield (1)213 writing in 1835 of the Kykawng lists Moo Inshet as a "good spirit" and Ningshet as an "evil spirit"; Neuville (1)341 of Assam says "the Singpho...make offerings to the Megh Deota, god of the elements clouds and stones, called also Ningschis." This is a good example of the flexibility of a single mythological concept within the single cultural context labelled Kachin. In the last case the Mu Nat appears to have been "becoming Hindu."

1. Gilhodes says Sinlap like Mu Sheng is accessible to commoners and chiefs alike.



"clan" into a structurally segmenting pyramid.

In the attached table (Diagram VII) I have worked out Kawlu Ma Nawng's material in this way. I would again emphasise what was said earlier, in Chapter 3, that this particular version of Kachin mythology is only a local construct designed to place in relation the various lineage groups that occur in the Hukawng Valley area. It is adapted for extension into other parts of the Kachin field, e.g., the Hkahku area, but would not in point of fact "fit" any similar construct built up from the traditions of the Hkahku area. I have only given in full that part of the diagram which refers to the Gumsa-Tsasen of the Tangai sub-clan since it is this group with which we are concerned in the early Assam literature. In a separate table I have correlations between the lineage names mentioned by Kawlu Ma Nawng and those appearing in the earlier literature. A large number of names occur in the early literature which cannot readily be identified in Kawlu Ma Nawng, but there is no difficulty about most of the crucial ones. Reference to the correlation table shows the remarkable range of variation that is possible in romanising an unfamiliar sound in non standardised orthograph. Further complications are introduced by the fact that early documents were copied in manuscript several times before being printed resulting in further changes. Initial L and initial S are almost interchangeable<sup>1</sup> and there

1. Presumably because "copperplate" S looks very like L.





# Supplement to Diagram VII

Correlation between Kawlu Ma Naung's modern spelling of Tsasen lineage names and that of earlier sources.

## Source

Kawlu Ma Naung. Bayfield. Hannay. Butler. Dalton. Others.

Tangai		Tenghai			Thengai (1)
					Denai (2)
Lajawn	Lujoun				Litjong (3)
Wahkyet	Wakkhet	Wakhut	Owaket		Wakyait (1)
					Wahket (4)
					Wakhyet (3)
Mei-aw		May-ho			
Ningru	Noongru	Ningroo	Ningroo	Ningroo	Ningrew (5)
Hkawtsu		Kudjoo	Koojoo	Koojoo	Cooju (5)
Hpungin	Poonging	Poongeen		Phooeyeng	
Ningkrawp	Nungkrop	Ningcoop		Ningko	
Dalpa		Duffa	Duffa	Duffa	Dupha (3)
Pylsa	Beesa	Beesa	Beesa	Beesa	Bisa (Pisa) (1)
Gashen	Kakhyen	Gakhen		Gukheng	Kayshan (5)
N'Bawn	Imbong	Imbon		Moozun	
Sumbaw	Tsumpong				Sibbom (2)
Sharaw	Shiraw	Shiro	Seero	Serrow	Seroo (3)
		Seeroo			Shirau (3)
					Seraj (2)
Numbrawng	Numbrong	Nimbrong	Noo-brong		Nimbrung (3)
Lalawng	Lalon	Laloung		Nubrung	
Jagun		Jagron (Jugun)			Wukhang (?) (1)
N'Dup Dumsa	Inloup	Undoop-			
N'Kumshang	Toontsa	tunsa		Thoomsha	Ootoop (3)
N'Hkumshang	Rumtshan	Kumchang		Koomjang	
	Oom Khoom			Wikhoom-	
	Tshung			Nisang	
N'Wangkhang	Nyung Wang				
	Khung				
Sarengkhyet				Sellengkhet	
					Shillingkhyet
Ninggam				Ningram	

- Others
- (1) Neufville
  - (2) Ymxm H.L.Jenkins (1870)
  - (3) Map dated 1862
  - (4) Vetch (1842)
  - (5) Bruce quoted by Pemberton

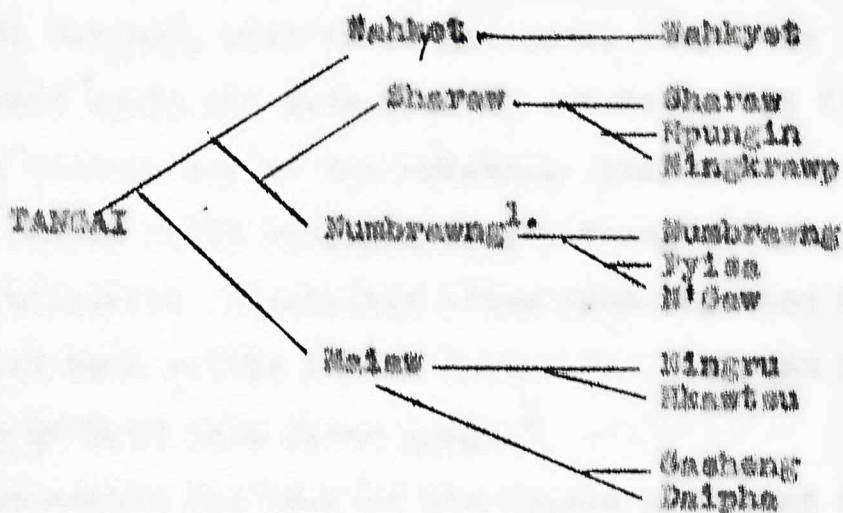


and there are documents where Lutterah, Shutterah; Lateo, Satoo Let, Set; appear almost side by side.

Kawlu Ma Nawng's account is presented discursively and anyone unfamiliar with Kachin mentality may think that I have read rather a lot into his text. Certainly there are many points where first hand cross questioning might have clarified the position but the general structural design of the pyramid is not far from what Kawlu Ma Nawng had in mind.

A particular feature to note is that among the groups here shown the gunlao/gumaa division cuts across the main clan affiliation. There are gumaa Tsasen, Marip, N'Hkum, Lahpai, Maran; there are also gunlao Tsasen, Marip, N'Hkum, Lahpai, Maran. The reason for this is that the gumaa-gunlao opposition is an opposition of territorial groups. A whole area is either organized on a gumaa or on a gunlao basis. Any particular territorial group is however in terms of clan highly composite; the lineages that form the dependents of a gumaa chief, or of a gunlao "headman", are drawn indiscriminately from all "clans" so that a political opposition between a gumaa and a gunlao territory necessarily cuts across the larger scale clan affiliations such as Marip, Lahpai, Tsasen.

In this chapter we are particularly concerned only with that part of the tabulation which refers to the Tengai sub-clan forming a part of the gumaa branch of the Tsasen clan.  
(Diagram VIII)



We have already seen how Kawlu Ma Nawang's story relates that the Gasheng-Daipha group first settled in Assam under the Muttuck Gohain and alongside the Khampthi and their followers. The story then goes on to give the Pyisa a most complicated itinerary. Having settled for a while in the Tayun (Diyun) Valley they move to "the lower Barap River land."<sup>2</sup> (i.e. the country in Assam near the Tirap-Burhi Dihing confluence). Then having acquired Assamese followers they move back to the Tawang Mka at the north east

1. Numbrawng is not mentioned by Kawlu Ma Nawang but this grouping is specified as the "Dezga Khel" by early writers. Numbrawng Ga appears on modern maps where "old Deesa" used to be shown and Norree visiting this village for the first time in 1890 refers to its chief as "The Visa Teawbum, Namprong Visa" (Norree (1) Entry Nov. 16th)
2. Kawlu Ma Nawang (1) 33.



and the Hukawng, with their Assamese. They then decide to move west again and endeavour to settle on the Tarung Hka at the western end of the Hukawng. This move is resisted by the Marip chief Ningbyen Wongdu Nawng who possessed Shan followers. Eventually after much fighting Pyisa and Ningbyen both settle in the Tarung Hka area and finally the Pyisa go back into Assam again.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile the rest of the Tsasen had moved from their "original home" in the Hkahku area across the Hkitmung Bum (Kumon Range) into the Hukawng where the gumaa and gunlao continued their feud. As a result of this fighting further groups of gumaa Tangai moved into Assam from time to time. In particular the Malaw, who are specified as including the Hkawtsu and Mingru and are contrasted with the Wahkyet the senior of the Tangai sub-groups, "went to Assam to join their relatives the Pyisa and Gasheng Dalpha peoples."<sup>2</sup>

Elsewhere the "Sharaw and Hpungin Ningkrawp" peoples are linked with the Tangai Tsasen and later when the "Tsasen gumaa Ningkrawp La went to Assam all the Tsasen gumaa followed him."<sup>3</sup>

The Dalpha group also are given additional adventures.

1. Ibid p.31/32.
2. Ibid p.28.
3. Ibid p.16;30.

Gasheng Tu is represented as married to N'Gaw Ja Pan - of Pyisa clan. He has a quarrel with his "brother" Dalpha Gam - as a result of which Gasheng Tu is arrested by the Burmese and dies. Thus the Gasheng are at feud with the Dalpha - their clan brothers. Gasheng Ninggun the son of Gasheng Tu allies himself with Lakang Khyeng Tu - the head of the N'Dup Dumsa ~~gumlap~~ <sup>Pyisa</sup> - who is also ~~gama~~ to the ~~Pyisa~~ group, and who had an old feud against Madawk Gawhkal (Muttuck Gohain). A combined Gasheng-Lakang-Pyisa attack on the Dalpha Gam results in the latter withdrawing to the Hukawng where he counter attacks the N'Dup Dumsa and captured from them the site on the Wanai Mka which has been Dalpha Ga ever since.<sup>1</sup>

It is important always to recollect that such stories <sup>are</sup> and designed as explanations of the present distribution of the various groups concerned. The ideology is that each of these legendary migrations represents in effect a fission of the local group. Part of it moves and acquires land rights elsewhere, part stays put. It is true that the Numbrawng-Pyisa, the Malaw, the Gasheng Dalpha, the Sharaw etc, all had branches in Assam but the parent settlements of these Assam branches continued to exist in the Hukawng and are in fact most of them still in the same localities where they were observed by Hannay and Bayfield in 1835.

1. Ibid pp.34/36; cf. Butler (1)65/66.



Now let us turn to the stories of a century ago. About 1826 Beesa Gam (Pyisa Gam) recounted his legendary history to Neufville.<sup>1</sup> There had, he said, been 21 generations since the beginning of time and his own family had halted at the following places on its travels from the ancestral home Mujai Singra Bum (Majoi Shingra Bum).

1. Kinduyung on a branch of the Sri Lohit  
(Kinduyang on a branch of the Mali Nka)
2. Nangbrang Book in hills S.E. from Hukhung and four  
or five days from the Chinese border.  
(?? BUM)
3. Kultobung Hill ( )
4. Pisa Pani (Pyisa Nka) "east of Hukhung"
5. Muning Pani "where they had an action with Burmese  
and Shans and were victorious"  
(Mawning Nka close to the Tawang Nka)
6. "Tyrung Pani and old Bise of Hukhung, the Bija Mun Yua  
of the Burmese" (Tyrung Nka)<sup>2</sup>

From "old Bise or Hukhung" they had lately moved into Assam where "new Bise" (Beesa, Pyisa) was situated on the Burhi Dihing. The "original clans" that had thus migrated to Assam were "Bisa, Kultung, Satao, and Naula". No one else mentions anything resembling Kultung or Naula, but Satao or Latao occurs frequently and is probably Lahtaw.<sup>3</sup>

1. Neufville(1)340,350.
2. This is the first literary reference to Hukhung(Hukawang) and appears to refer definitely to a specific village Pemberton's map dated 1835 seems to be the first use of the word to denote the whole plain of the Upper Chinwin(Tanai Nka) valley.
3. Latao certainly equates with Satao and the modern map reference Lathau. Similarly Sutora equates with Luttora etc., and is in one reference written Lattow La. The identification with Lahtaw however is uncertain. There is a major lineage of N'Mikum called Lahtau. See Geis Census of India, 1911, Burma Vol.1. Report p. 152



It will be noticed that Beesa Gam's route from the ancestral Nkanku area is substantially simpler than that given by Kawlu Ma Mawng since it omits the complication of a preliminary visit to Assam prior to the final settlement. Kawlu Ma Mawng's version represents a blending of two tales, one a tradition of migration, and the other a myth of land title through initial occupancy.

Here is another story given by Neufville<sup>1</sup>

"The Gaums (chiefs) of Bisa and Satao....adduced the case of their common ancestor seven generations back who at his death left three sons from whom the families of the present Satao Gaum, Bisa Gaum and Wakyait (Wahkyet) Gaum are descended. Of these Satao Gaum the eldest succeeded to the chiefship and the land, while Wakyait Gaum removed to another part of the country taking all the cattle and personal property and leaving the Bisa Gaum to seek his own fortune....the descendants of this last have now acquired the ascendancy both in wealth and influence over the others."

This suggests that the initial title in Singpho land in Assam rests with (a) Satao (Lahtaw). (b)Wakyait (Tangai-Wahkyet) (c)Bisa (Fyisa - actually a subdivision of Tangai). This suggests three distinct territories or mung. How far do these correspond to those already inferred?

In Neufville's time Beesa Gam's village was on the Burhi Dihing not far from its junction with the Noa Dihing; Wahkyet village was further north on the Noa Dihing; and

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1. Neufville (1) 341.



Satao (Latao, Lathau, Lattow) was further north still on the Tenga Pani river in the midst of Khampiti settlements. If I am correct therefore in supposing that the Singpho territory in Assam consisted of three mung formed by the valleys of the Burhi Dihing-Thurap, Noa Dihing-Biyun, and Tenga Pani rivers respectively then each of these three villages was in one of the mung.

The principle chief of the Tenga Pani area is elsewhere given as Satora (Luttera?, Suttora, Lattow La)<sup>1</sup> and is described specifically as a Khakku as opposed to a Tsasen-Singpho. I think we may conclude that this territory though subordinate to the Khampiti was from the Kachin point of view Lahtaw mung (i.e. Luttera & Lahtaw La).

The remaining two mung should both be "Tangai-Tsasen" but reference to Diagram VIII shows that there are at least three groups competing for these two titles namely Wahkyet-Sharaw, Numbrawng and Malaw. All, on the face of it, are equally du baw (chiefly) branches of the same elm, so that any one of them might have been dominant. Actually while the Numbrawng-Pyisa group seem to have been firmly established on the Burhi Dihing, there was a shifting balance of power in the remaining Noa Dihing-Biyun area. In Neuville's time Wahkyet village (shown on one map as Wakhet-Shirau) was

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1. Dalton (i) "Lalaong (of Lattow Khell) son of old Suttora is the most influential Khakio Singpho in this quarter."

within a mile or so of where the Duffa chief's village had been until he had fled to the Hukawng, and was also close to the village of Ningru and slightly to the east of a tea tract which later turned out to be the property of "Kujudoo" (Hkawtsu Tu), in other words in the midst of a block of Malaw villages. It will be noted that the Beesa Gam's story does not claim that these Assam Wahkyet were land "owners", but only that they "had removed to another part of the country." The conclusion is that this Noa Dihing-Diyun area was at this time not Wahkyet-Sharan mung but Malaw mung. The implication of the Beesa Gam's story is that, since he wishes to minimise the importance of the Dalpha he chooses to imply that all the Malaw are descendants of the Wahkyet, - which is structurally correct.

The intermediate status of the Wahkyet in Assam between the rival Beesa and Duffa chiefs is well brought out by comparing Kawlu Ma Nawng's stories of Wahkyet Chyang Nawng<sup>1</sup> with Butler's contemporary account of Wakutchangnang.<sup>2</sup> From this it appears that (presumably about 1832) Wahkyet Chyang Nawng eloped with a Tyisa woman. The Tyisa then put his brother Wahkyet Doi La in the stocks as security for compensation, but Wahkyet Chyang Nawng refused to pay up. When eventually released Wahkyet Doi La considered himself at

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1. Kawlu Ma Nawng (1) 37.

2. Butler (1) 71, 79.



feud with the Pyisa and went to the Mukaung where he stirred up Daipha Gam and the "Jagun and N'Ntem people."<sup>1</sup>

to raid the Pyisa. This raid is historical and took place in 1835. The British attempted to negotiate with the Duffa(Daipha) chief employing Wahkyet Chyang Hwang as distorted the British messages so that the negotiations came to nothing, and for this the British put him in gaol came to nothing, and for this the British put him in gaol for a year; but on his release he appears to have settled his differences with the Pyisa, for Butler in 1846 mentions that "he has been enabled to marry the Beesa Gam's daughter .... and is now residing at Beesa." Presumably he had paid up the disputed bride price.

So much for the Tenga Fani and Koa Bihing-Diyun areas. The Beesa Gam's own village in the Burhi Bihing - Tirap area was by general consent Pyise mun.

Hannay<sup>2</sup> in 1847 on the basis of his own researches mainly carried out in 1835 makes a very useful attempt at structural analysis. His data on the Mukaung valley groups is not in general very helpful but his Assam material is good. Two quotations are sufficient for our purpose

1. Kawi Ma Hwang (1) 37.

"The Jagun and N'Ntem people were on bad terms with the Pyisa over a refusal to return slaves."

N'Ntem had a village on the Burhi Bihing (i.e. in Pyisa territory) but in tradition entered Assam as adherents of Wahkyet. Jagun (Yagoon, Jugun Doo) also had a village on the Burhi Bihing near modern Lado and today have a village in the Mukaung close to Numbrawng Pyisa Wahkyet and Sharau. They appear to be common adherents of either Pyisa or Wahkyet-Sharau.

2. Hannay, (11) 7/10.

The following are the designations of the several clans being those which are generally known: Tessa, Mirip, Lophae, Lutong, Mayrung. Besides these there is a clan on the borders of Assam east of Buddyan, the Luttera Kahoos who are called Lessoo<sup>1</sup> and came originally from the Chinese frontier. They cannot however be a distinct tribe for though their language is unintelligible to those unaccustomed to them from their quick method of speaking, it is essentially that of the Khekhyens."

and then again

"In Assam with the exception of the Pissee Gam, Kudjoo (Morton) and Yagoon (Jagun) who appear to be distinct families and Tangsang Tang of the Mayrung clan, the whole are of the Tessa (Tsatzen) division of the tribe which besides being a very numerous branch are considered the most respectable and civilised from their having been so long living amongst the Shans and Assamese. They are subdivided into three clans in Assam which has given rise to a good deal of rivalry and many quarrels. They are designated respectively

Tenghai, Mayho, Nimbrong, and including the elder branch comprise the following heads of families.

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1. of Dalton (1) who gives Khill names for this area Incha Lessoo, Tongwa Neeoo, Lessoo Lathoo, Neeoo. There are modern groups in the Nam Tanai area who call themselves Lisu, Leisu, Ngo-su and Neisu. See Davies (1)



Tenghai.  
(Tangai)

Wayo  
(Maia)

Wimbrong  
(Nakhrang)

428.

Elder branch  
in the  
Nykong from  
whom the  
others  
separated  
several gener-  
ations back

Shiro (Sharew)      Gakhen (Gasheng)      Besssa (Tyisa)  
Ningsoop (Ningtrawp)      Latao (Lahtaw?)  
Toonpeen (Npurgin)      Ningroo (Ningru)  
Kumohang (N'Ekumohang)      Bessong  
Tsau La      Tsoopkong  
Kottah      Puffa (Daipha)  
Kenah

Imban (N'Bawn)  
Undooptunah  
(N'Dup  
Dussa)  
Laloung  
(Lalawng)

The following points are worth special note.

- 1) Harnay fails to make any identification between Lutong, Luttera and Latao all of which should fairly certainly read Lahtaw
- 2) He is impressed by the cultural contrast between the Tsasen Kachins and those living in the Tengapani area
- 3) He stresses in effect that there is little overt cultural contrast between Assamese "Shens" and "Tsasen Singpho"

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1. The subdivisions of the Nukawng "elder branches" are given as

Imban (N'Bawn)

Panzau

Donsey Kang La

Sayrum La Baneang

Shiro Thoo (Sharew Tu)

Lakhop Tiron (Khakawp)

Wakret La (Wahkyet)

Waloop Samrong

etc.

Toonah (Dussa)

Lakang Ren Thoo

(Lakang Nkyen Tu)

Bassoo Thoo

(Matsaw Phyl)

Ungau La

(Ningau La)

Laloung (Lalawng)

Rhet Kates La

Injang Nong

Tarapoung Nong

Koomrong

She Taw La.

(iv) His grouping of lineage into clans does not seriously conflict with that deduced from Kawi Ma Nang except on the following points.

- a) Kudjao (Kkawsau) are rated as non Tsasen
- b) Kunchang (K'Kumshang) are rated as Tangai. In fact they were probably followers of the Wahkyet. Kawi Ma Nang refers to the "Wahkyet Kunglung" people. Dalton shows an individual of the name of Moonlong Koo as belonging to the Hikhoom Nisang khel. The implication is that the K'Kumshang in Assam were closely linked with the Wahkyet who are omitted by Hannay but ought to appear at the head of the Tangai column.
- c) I have already shown that Latso should probably be read Lahtaw; in which case the attribution Malaw-Tsasen is incorrect.

It should be noted that Hannay's three columns do not correspond to the three territorial divisions (mung) which have previously been considered. Hannay is here considering only the Tsasen, - that is to say the Singpho in the Non-Dihing-Diyun and Burhi Dihing-Turas areas. These areas we have already concluded were respectively Malaw and Kumbrawng-Pyisa mung. The various lineages which Hannay lists under Tangai (Tanghai) and also those which he mentions as "distinct families" thus have no especial territorial allocation and we should expect to find them living in both the Malaw and Pyisa mung in a subordinate situation.

And that is what we in fact find in early maps. The villages of the Gasheng, Ningru and Dalpha are in Malaw mung, and Pyisa villages are in pyisa mung, are scattered seemingly at random through the two mung.<sup>1</sup>

1. As an exception to this Supkeng (Tsoophkeng) is shown on the Burhi Dihing.



Yet this set up was in a sense paradoxical, for, according to tradition, the Wahkyet-Sharaw lineage were the senior group. One must, I think, infer that political dominance among the different groups was constantly shifting. Possibly the predominant role taken by the Pyisa was entirely due to British influence. Mackenzie<sup>1</sup> for example gives the curious information that before the Singpho revolt in 1842 the Bessa chief "had appointed Seroo La Sein (i.e. a Sharaw chief) to be his successor "as paramount. It is certain too that ever since the British came to have accurate information of the Tangai at the western end of the Mukaung (i.e. since 1890) the Sharaw chief has been the acknowledged senior, and in that area the Numbawng-Pyisa are subordinate to the Sharaw.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Mackenzie (1) 71.
  2. Morree (1) Nov.16. Writing from "Namprong-Visa or Pisa" (i.e. Numbawng-Pyisa). "The Tsawbwas and villagers here appear to look upon the Tsawbwas of Barore (Sharaw) - as the head of the Tsaen Thainbaws (Tsaen Jinghpaw) in these parts. They do not acknowledge any allegiance to him but he has great influence and they usually do what he says...." ..... "Further on on the Tanaï stream Talfanung (Dalphu Nung) has a good deal of influence."
- Kawlu Ma Nung (1) 47 regards the Sharaw as the principal modern Tsaen chief.
- In 1870 Sibben (Sumbaw?) and Serroj (Sharaw?) are noted as the most influential chiefs in the western Mukaung (See H.L. Jenkins, II, p.232)

If this analysis of three MUNG is correct then we should expect the Tenga Pani Laktaw chief to act independently of his Tenga and Malaw fellows and to concert his actions with the Khemptis of Sadiya. The evidence supports this view.

When the Singpho revolted in 1839 the only Singpho to join in were the Tengganees group<sup>1</sup>; on the other hand when the Tenga and Malaw Singphos revolted in 1843 the Tengganees group kept out<sup>2</sup>. The Tengganees group were in revolt in 1830 and the instigation of the Sadiya Khawa Gohain was strongly suspected; but the Beesa group remained loyal and sided with the British.<sup>3</sup> Again in 1835 the Tengganees Singpho took the side of the Duffa against the Beesa, but again it was suspected that the Khempti Chief, by this time deposed from his official position as Khawa Gohain, was also in league with the Duffa.<sup>4</sup> After the reprisals following the Singpho revolt in 1843 many Singpho groups especially those who had close links with the Duffa withdrew from Assam altogether. The following passage from Hanny<sup>5</sup> suggests that the minor lineage

1. Butler (1) 72/73.
2. Dalton (1). In 1853 the Lattora Chief is the only one of the old leaders not in disgrace. Beesa has died in jail; Ningru has gone into eclipse "suspected of treason"; Duffa and the other Malaw have fled to the hills or to the Nukawng but Lattow Lalong "son of old Lattora" is in high favour.
3. Butler 45.64.
4. Ibid 48.65.
5. Hanny, 11, 44/45.



groups on the Moa Dihing which had previously been dependant on the Mai-aw then for a while became dependant on the Lahtaw Chiefs of the Tenspanee group.

Now in 1847, by death and emigration to Hongkong the Singpho country of the Moa and Boree Dihing may be said (with the exception of a very few in the vicinity of Beesa) to be deserted entirely. There is still however a considerable native Singpho population to the east of Suddiah in the Mena Bhoom rang of hills and on the north bank of the Upper Dihing. These comprise the clans of Suttera (i.e. Lahtaw La) and Pessee a family of the Mayrung,<sup>2</sup> and one or two other subdivisions of the tribe. From this district generally known as Tenga Pani or Tayeng Kha the Beesa and Buffa Gams used generally to draw their supplies of men<sup>3</sup> when they wanted to annoy each other and in consequence of the part taken by the Luttera people in the inroad of Wakum Proonsein in 1831/32<sup>4</sup> and subsequently in the attack on Beesa in 1835 their villages were destroyed by the late Political Agent, Colonel White. Since that time however with the exception of a few bad characters they have remained quiet and peaceable subjects.

The "Peshee" were still on the Upper Dihing in 1893 when they were mentioned under the name Bishi by Errol Gray.

2. Resident on the Upper Dihing possibly related to the Lahtaw of the Tenga Pani. In 1838 there was a feud between the Peshee and the Lot chiefs in which the "Luttera chief" sided with Peshee. The Lot Gam was a neighbour and adherent of the Beesa.  
Butler (1) - 72; Mackenzie (1) 67; vetch (11) 279.
3. Hannay also mentions "Tangsang Tang of the Mayrung clan" Wilcox (1) 58, mentioned Tansantong "a relation of the Gam of Latora" as living on the Upper Dihing.
4. Butler (1) 64 gives the date as 1830. The identity of Wakum Proonsein is obscure. Butler calls him "Wakim Koomjoon, from the province of Hongkong." McCosh (1) 150 has Wakum Koonkie.
1. Hannay, 11, 44/ 45.



but by that time the dominant chief in the area was a Ningru so that the land was once more Maiew Nung.

Thus while the shifts and strategems of immediate politics might lead to all sorts of temporary combinations it does seem that there was some tendency always to revert to a traditionally approved pattern of territorial authority. But one can easily exaggerate the importance of the traditional pattern.

From instances already cited it is clear that mere clan affiliation or affinal kinship was not sufficient to prevent opposition. The <sup>Gasheng</sup>~~Gakhen~~ and Daipha were close "clan" brothers but had been opposed. Wahkyet-Sheraw and Gasheng were both dama to Pyisa<sup>1</sup> but this seems to have resulted in opposition more often than combination. In short the kinship structure does not really explain the political cleavages at any given moment. The kinship "network" is very complex. Everyone is related to everyone else in several different ways. Oppositions and combinations are political and economic - the struggle for power, for land, for "slaves" - only in tradition these oppositions are remembered as a part of the kinship pattern or in terms of a contrast of ritual.

The following from Hannay does little to clarify the issue though it emphasises the political rivalry and local

1. Gasheng Tu married N'Gaw Ja Pan of Pyisa family Wahkyet Chyang Nawng married a daughter of Pyisa Gan.  
Kawlu Ma Nawng (1) 34, 37.



instability inherent in the system. There seems no particular reason to suppose that the structure would have been any more stable if the British had been absent from the scene

"The principal chiefs found by the British officers in possession of lands within the boundary of Assam were Wakret (Wahkyet) and Latao Gams. Gakhen Thoo having died some time before, the Duffa Gam had thus become the representative of that family of Singphos. The Neessa family had also occupied lands chiefly on the Upper Boree Dihing, but the chief, the Neessa Gam, being in the interests of the Burmese, went over to the Hookong, soon after to return however and supplant his rival the Duffa Gam in the good opinion of the political officers of Assam. From this circumstance we may reasonably state sprang all our troubles with this tribe, ungrounded reports being constantly set agoing of invasions and inroad by both parties to suit their own ends and deceive the authorities; the value of these being naturally much enhanced by the jungly state of the thinly populated country the fears of the Assamese inhabitants and the paucity of the troops on the frontier."<sup>1</sup>

In the light of the analysis which I have presented the picture is of three clearly defined territories, one of which was securely held by a group of Kachins subordinate to the Khampti; the other two territories being held by rival groups of Tangai-Tsasen in somewhat insecure tenure under the Muttuck Gohain but with third parties intriguing

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1. Hannay, II, 43. This suggests Wahkyet as a mung chief. Mackenzie, I, 64 says the "four chief cantons" in 1825 were under "Luttora Gam, Lettao Gam, Neessa Gam, and Duffa Gam"; Wahkyet is not mentioned. The frequent mention of Latao (Lattao etc) may be due to the fact that this village was the nearest large Singpho settlement to Sadiya.



and competing for additional political power<sup>1</sup>.

Such a situation is not one that appeals to colonial administrators. Mackenzie writing in 1884<sup>2</sup> criticises the efforts of Neufville and Scott to achieve a workable system of indirect rule in the following terms

"The character of their tribal organisation, not perhaps at that time fully understood, rendered the ultimate success of such negotiations very uncertain. They were not ordinarily, except for continued aggression, a united tribe but an aggregate of independent petty cantons each under its own chief and each jealous of the other and quite ready to attack its neighbour if need were or interest prompted. Hence it was almost impossible to deal with them as a whole though it was by no means difficult to attach temporarily to our interest any individual chief who thought he saw some advantage to be gained therefrom."

The system of course was not as chaotic as this gloomy analysis suggests. An anthropologist with a knowledge of the kinship structure and the de facto political situation would be able to predict with considerable accuracy just which two groups would come into conflict next, but Mackenzie's analysis had important long term consequences for the Kachins of Burma. Mackenzie was the officer responsible for formulating

1. Kawlu Ma Nawng (1) 30/33 "Lakang Nkyeng Nawng Gumbkawng arrived and met Madaw Gawkai. 'We meet as brothers; let us be friends! My people wish to fight against the Kachins of Assam; but I will help you. That tribute which you cannot now collect, I will help you to collect' said Lakang Nkyeng Nawng Gumbkawng on arrival." Later however Lakang Nkyeng Nawng is killed by the Madaw Gawkai and the "Teasen Gumsas" side with the Madaw Gawkai against the murdered man's sons Lakang Nkyen Tu. The Lakang chiefs were at this time the head of the N'Dup Dumsa Gumlas faction in the Hukawng.
2. Mackenzie (1)63.



the main lines of administrative policy in the annexation period 1890 onwards. The policy which he advocated 1.

and which was followed, was to treat each chief of a village or "village tract", - i.e., each marang duwa and often each village headman - as separate and independent with direct responsibility to government. Confederations on a mung scale, where they existed, were broken up, often by force of arms; the "tracts" that were recognised were fixed purely for administrative convenience and had no relation to existing Kachin political boundaries."

The results of this policy will emerge more clearly in later chapters but it is sufficient to note here that this policy was wholly negative. Where large scale political integration had been achieved the confederation was broken down again into its component elements. Peace was achieved by rigidly preserving the status quo and permitting no territorial adjustments of the situation as at 1890.

"Cultural flux" as understood in this book was brought to a sudden and drastic conclusion.

But granted that this approach was negative was there really any practical alternative? In my own view there was. I would argue that these early administrators both in Assam and in Upper Burma started off from a fundamentally false premise. They assumed that the "Singphos" in the one case,



and the "Kachins" in the other were a clear cut distinct group and that therefore in their own interests, and in the interests of everyone else besides, they should be separately administered. They should be forcibly prevented from exploiting their plains neighbours - Shan, Burmese or Assamese as the case might be, - and should in turn be protected from the exploitation of foreign adventurers such as Chinese or Shan-Chinese chieftains from over the border.

Once this sharp division of the Kachins from the rest was assumed, I grant that the negative, atomistic direct form of administration became inevitable. But the natural political groupings, I argue, are not cultural groupings. In every case where the paramount power does not interfere the "state" grows across the cultural frontiers. Plains people become subject to hill people and hill people in turn become subject to larger paramount powers centred in the plains.

In early 19th Century Assam, the Khampti, nominally subordinate to the Ahom Rajahs, were overlords of Singpho in the Tengapani River area and of miscellaneous "Assamese" and "Miri" in the Sadiya area. The Singpho of the Tengapawli in their turn, had their "Docaniya" adherents. Similarly Tsasen Singpho had their "Docaniyas" and "slaves", but in Assam were partially subordinate to the Muttuck Gohain and in the Mwakawng was subordinate firstly to the Shans of Mogaung and then, after their collapse, to the Burmese.

An ideal colonial administration would have developed



and consolidated on the basis of this feudal, extra-cultural, political order. But instead, working on the assumption that the cultural group is necessarily a significant political unit the structure had to be broken down into its smallest component parts before administration was considered possible at all.

Even in the initial stages in Assam the arbitrary appointment of the Beesa chief as "paramount"<sup>1</sup> was only a poor pretence at "indirect rule". Really his status was that of Government Agent. The evil consequences of this procedure may be briefly sketched.

The Beesse chief was appointed to the post of "Sunzatee"<sup>2</sup> and as such was "publicly recognized as the agent through whom the sentiments of the British Government should be made known to the different tribes. In other respects he had no controlling authority, and was regarded by his brother chieftains as merely their equal"<sup>3</sup>. Clearly however this position gave him influence out of all proportion to his normal (pre-British) status in the community. One of the most immediate consequences was that his feud enemy the Duffa Gam "withdrew from Assam into the district of Hookong, under Burmese control; and although repeatedly invited by the British authorities to return and resume his territory,

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1. Mackenzie (1) 65 uses the term "paramount chief."

2. Butler (1) 45, 65.

3. Ibid 61.



he never could be prevailed upon to do so.<sup>1</sup> The Duffa Gam indeed entered high politics and by a series of intrigues with the Burmese, the Assamese Pretender, the Sadiya Khamptis and a few transfrontier raids against the Beesa he eventually found himself a figure of international importance and aspired to set himself up as King of the Mwakawng with the aid of a force of Burmese mercenaries<sup>2</sup>!

Beesa Gaum seems to have fulfilled his duties as Sunzatee quite satisfactorily, by the simple procedure of doing nothing; he probably retained his position for as long as he did because he was something of a favourite with both Neufville and Scott,<sup>3</sup> but after their deaths there was a sharp change. Doubtless in the interests of increased efficiency the Beesa

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1. ibid 66.

2. A glamorous version of the Daipha Gam's adventures is given by Kawlu Ma Nawng pp.33/42. His activities led to the British registering an official protest with the court of Ava in 1835 in consequence of which the Burmese agreed to send a column to the Mwakawng to restore order. Hannay was attached to this column as observer and he was thus the first Englishman to visit this region. The Burmese appear to have treated Daipha Gam as if he were a minor Shan Tsawbwa and, according to Kawlu Ma Nawng, gave him a variety of gifts and letters of authority which are still in existence. Anyway he was not at all cowed by this first expedition and the British protested again. A further expedition was sent from Ava, this time accompanied by Bayfield. Hannay meanwhile had returned to Assam and together with Griffiths (a botanist) crossed the Patkoi and met Bayfield and the Burmese in the Mwakawng from where they all returned to Ava. After this the popularity and influence of the Daipha Gam seems to have declined perhaps because, as Bayfield suggested (p.192), the doubtless extremely expensive visits of two Burmese military columns in three years was more than his fellow chiefs had bargained for.

3. Neufville (1) 339; McCosh (1) 151.



Gaun was dismissed and "Salim Sing, a Soobadar of the Assam Light Infantry" was posted in his place. Another Subedar followed him in 1939.<sup>1</sup>

Whatever may have been the Singphos opinion of having the Beesa Gam as their overlord this was an undoubted change for the worse. From then onwards there was persistent "unrest" throughout the Singpho frontier area culminating in a definite insurrection by the Tangai and M<sub>ai</sub>-aw groups in January 1843.<sup>2</sup> Drastic reprisals followed as a result of which many Singpho groups especially those who had been adherents of the Duffa withdrew from the province altogether Beesa Gaun ended his life in gaol.<sup>3</sup>

From 1843 onwards the European population in Assam increased rapidly along with the intensive development of Lakhimpur, the former Muttuok, as a centre of tea production. The Singpho once they had been squeezed back to the South East outside the area earmarked for development ceased to be of any political importance.<sup>4</sup> The relatively "direct" form

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1. Butler (1) 65.

Later in the century the earlier system seems to have been resumed. Errol Gray (11) 222, mentions "Ningroo Samon, who receives a small salary from our Government as political jemadar of this frontier."

2. Butler (1) 75.

3. Dalton (1) lxxxiv.

4. There can be no question that originally the admitted Singpho territory extended into areas later earmarked by Government for tea development. See Butler, also Mackenzie (1), 70.

of Administration which followed on the 1843<sup>4</sup> insurrection was therefore in a sense successful. All was tranquil on the frontier and the traditional Singpho authority over the Nagas in the unadministered areas of the Patkoi even became a positive asset.<sup>1</sup> It is not surprising therefore that in later years Administrations, with the experience of Assam in their minds took a somewhat cynical view of Kachin political structure. They felt that direct rule had been a success while indirect rule through paramount chiefs had failed; but actually indirect rule had never been tried while direct rule was a "success" only because of the overwhelming predominance of European power from 1843 onwards. So far as the Singphos themselves were concerned direct rule was so destructive to their economic interests that most of them left the country.

If in the first instance instead of giving power to the Beesa Chief, to the exasperation of his rivals, the British had reinforced the traditional authority of the Muttuck and Sadiya Gohains, they might have found the Singpho less troublesome. These petty chiefs had an influence among the Singpho which a mere government appointed agent could never achieve. The following is a case in point.

In 1835 the Duffa Gam burnt the Beesa chief's village.

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1. Mackenzie (1) 72; Macgregor, (11) 24; Dewar, (1). It is a general phenomenon that wherever Kachins and Nagas are neighbours the former are politically ascendant. While Mackenzie (1884) remarks "the Singpho are of great use to us in restraining and keeping in order the Naga Tribes of P.T.O.



and slew 90 of his people and the Political Agent moved out to take punitive reprisals but

"Prior to resorting to hostilities every exertion was made to induce the chief to come to terms, and three days truce was granted for this purpose. The Khantee chiefs and the Bursenaputtee of Nittuck, who accompanied the political agent as auxiliaries on this occasion, were required to escort the Duffa Gaus to the camp of the Political Agent as a security that his person would be respected." L.

It seems a pity that this type of approach was not more general.

#### The Singpho and their Assamese Dependents.

I have suggested above that the perpetual squabbles between rival Singpho chieftains which so exasperated the early British administrators were not so much "family feuds" as struggles for power, for land and for "slaves". These three objectives were really synonymous.

The Singphos in Assam, and also in the Nukawng for that matter, were in a flat fertile country ideally suited for wet paddy cultivation. But their numbers were small. In their ancestral hills in the Mkhakhu area the Jinghpaw had developed a social habit of segmentation which distributed the population thinly over vast areas at a density of about 15 persons to the square mile. This as we have seen in Chapter 4 was an economic arrangement for the conditions of ~~language to which~~

(Note 1 Continued from Page 441) the Patkoi", Hannay in 1846 took a more jaundiced view:- "I have reason to believe that many Abor-Naga villages on the Assam side of the great range have been within these last five years plundered and many of the inhabitants bought and sold into slavery by the Singphos, who are enabled to overpower small villages by possessing firearms" Selection of Papers p. 314.



they were accustomed. In the plains on the other hand such dispersal is highly uneconomic. In effect the Singpho had the choice of occupying a small plains area and working it themselves or of occupying a large area and getting someone else to work it for them. They do not appear to have ever seriously considered the former alternative! All their traditions tended towards expansion rather than concentration.

According to Kawlu Ma Nawng's story<sup>1</sup> the Hukawng Valley was formerly occupied by the Hkawseeng Shans who had under them a dependent people the Hkummaung Hkumman Nagas.<sup>2</sup> The country was ruled by the Mainghkwan Wa who was under the Mogaung Wa and under the former were the Shan "Chyauhpas" (Sawbwas) of Hpaknaw, Hkanseawng, Pangsang, and Kangdau. The Hkumman Wa made friends with Laisai Nawng Gynhkawng of the Marip-N'Ding clan and they sealed their friendship "by an exchange of spears and the planting of elephant grass" - i.e. by a definite ritually sanctioned treaty. The Hkumman Wa then invited Laisai Nawng to come to the Hukawng and introduced him to the various Shan Sawbwas who in due course allotted land to the various Kachin groups.

The story goes on

Four hundred years ago the Shan chiefs had 7000 households in their tracts. The Kachins followed the Shans by a slow infiltration which subsequently led to them introducing the gunlay mode of thought amongst the Shans. In the fighting consequent upon

1. Kawlu Ma Nawng (1) 15, 41.

2. Hkummaung Hkumman - See above p. 33. 401 fr. note.



this sunlay movement, Kachins were employed as fighting men on both sides. The people on the losing side in this fight ran away from the Mwakung and their land was taken over by Kachins. As more and more Shans ran away more and more Kachins entered into their land; finally the Kachins were in complete possession of the Valley .....After the great exodus the only places where Shans remained in the valley were Kangdau, Mainghkwan, and Ningbyen. There were also some Shans at Dalu (Taro)....The Ningbyen Shans are still in the valley as they accepted the overlordship of the Ningbyen Kachin Chief. They remain subordinate to him even now. The Mainghkwan Shans were looked after by the Malwabum Chiefs so no one dare ill treat them. They are still at Mainghkwan.

This modest story contains in its grains of historical fact. While Mogaung was flourishing and independent the Kachins in the Mwakung were almost certainly subject to the Shans. Mogaung was "liquidated" during the latter part of the 18th Century and the general Shan disintegration that followed was due to the Burmese rather than the Kachins. There are several authorities for this view.

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1. There are also Shans at Dalu (Taro) who until the British arrived were protected by the Lajawn Kachin Chiefs. Kangdau (Kantau) is adjacent to Mumbrawng-Pyisa in the Sharaw tract. As late as 1890 there were "Shans" here subject to Kachins, for Norree refers to Kintaw village a mile and a half from Visa or Pise" and the "Kintaw Tsawbwa, a Theinbaw, and his deputy the Shan Thugyee." The Kintaw Tsawbwa was in turn subject to the Sarose (Shawar) chief. Kawlu Ma Nawng however says that "The Shans formerly at Kangdau were so badly treated by the Kachins that they finally moved to the Dalu area." Kawlu Ma Nawng (1) 41, 46. Norree entry for 16 November.



- (i) After the Kachins and Shans had mixed in the valley and the Sawbwas had all departed the Burmese Kings ruled for a short while. During that time a Myock was stationed at Mainghkwan and this Myock collected tribute in gold. His rate of tribute was two tolas of gold per household. As this rate was oppressive the people were highly dissatisfied with him and Shans and Kachins joined together against him.<sup>1</sup>
- (ii) The Myo Wun appears to have lost no time in availing himself of the advantages of the situation for on the very day after landing (at Mogaung) he commenced a system of unrelenting taxation to enable him to pay for his appointment..... A rapid succession of governors within a few years all influenced by the same principle had already reduced the inhabitants of Mogaung to a state bordering on extreme poverty and the distress occasioned by the extortions now practised was bitterly complained of by the wretched victims of such heartless extortion. The Shan inhabitants of the town were employed by the Burmese officers to enforce the excessive payment of tribute from the Singfos and Kahkyens of the surrounding hills which had led to much ill will on the part of the latter by whom they were stigmatised as "the dogs of the Burmans."<sup>2</sup>
- (iii) The district (Mogaung) was finally wrested from the last reigning tributary Shan Tsaubwa Hounng Tsein, in the Burmese year 1160 (A.D. 1799) by a Burmese force in consequence of his intercepting an Assamese princess on her way from Assam to the King of Ava. At this time Mogaung is said to have been a very populous district but the exactions of the Burmese have driven the people to the banks of the Thyendweng (Chindwin) and other places remote from Burmese authority.<sup>4</sup>
- (iv) Formerly the population of the Mukaung was entirely Shan and previous to the invasion of Assam by the Burmese the town of Mainghkwan (Maingthkwan) contained 1500 houses and was governed by the chief of Mogaung. From that period the exactions of the Burmese officers have

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1. Kawlu Ma Nawng (i) 42.

2. Hannay, i, 97. It is noticeable that in this and all other accounts the antagonism between Kachin and Burman is represented as much more acute than the antagonism between Kachin and Shan.

3. I cannot verify this date. The Burmese appear to have originally attacked "Pong" about 1865. cf. Luce (i)

4. Bayfield, i, 184.



led to extensive emigration and to avoid the oppressions to which they are hourly exposed the Shans have sought an asylum in the remote glens and valleys on the banks of the Khyendwen and the Singfos among the recesses of the mountains at the Eastern extremity of the valley. This state of affairs has led to general anarchy.<sup>1</sup>

But the point that I would stress is that the Singphos on entering Assam in the latter half of the 18th century already had behind them a tradition of joint political organisation with Shans. The actual sequence of events in the Hukawng seems to have been approximately as follows:-

- a) An initial situation in which the Shans in the Hukawng are part of a stable Shan State namely Mogaung and are thereby politically dominant. The Kachins enter the employ of the Shans as labourers and mercenaries.
- b) Disintegration of the central power at Mogaung leads to quarrelling among local Shan leaders.
- c) Political dominance passes to the Kachins; some Shans become adherents of the Kachins others move away down the Chindwin.

But even in this last phase the Kachins were not independent but were subject to Burmese control. Thus for example the Fongsau route to the Hukawng from Assam which under the British regime gradually became totally impassable was under the Burmese kept open by Government order

The Burmese government in former days took care that there should be a village or rather a military settlement every twelve or fifteen miles along the route and it was the business of the people living at these stations to cut the jungle occasionally, to remove fallen trees and other obstructions from the path. The route has now fallen entirely into disuse on account of the posts having been one by one deserted.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Hanny, 1, 102.  
2. H.L. Jenkins, 1, 71.



Even as late as 1870 the Burmese still exercised some sort of control

Burmese authority he told us was maintained by the excitement of dissensions amongst the different clans, - no single chief who has any cause for disagreement with his neighbours dares incur the displeasure of the Woon (Mogaung Wun) lest the chiefs with whom he is at variance should be invited to burn and plunder his village.<sup>1</sup>

The general pattern was closely duplicated in the relations of the Singphos with their Assamese neighbours. While the Singphos at all times remained at least partially subordinate to the Assamese political authorities such as the Mattuck and Sadiya Gohains yet locally the Assamese commonality became subject to the Singpho.

Hannay's view of the process of subjection was as follows:

"Their first settlements were on the Tenga Panee east of Suddyah and on the Upper Booree Dehing where the Assamese population consisted of Caparees principally and a few Ahoms.....The Singphos of those days, amongst whom was Gakhen Theo (a chief of great influence and much respected), were well spoken of and I am told that the greater number of the Assamese with whom they came first in contact were not averse to placing themselves under the protection of these newcomers, their own Government having become so weak as to entirely lose sight of this remotely situated population, the intermediate country between them and the Maresahs' capital having suffered most from the insurrection of the Mpa-Maresahs. It is not therefore until the Burmese invasion that we hear of those forays which in the course of a few years nearly depopulated the Eastern Districts. Then every chief far and near who could command a few men made a dash at the populous parts of

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1. H.L. Jenkins, 11, 233.



the Valley until the Assamese had become so utterly heart-broken and helpless that it was no uncommon sight for one Singpho to drive twenty Assamese bound before him. In the end indeed the people of the Eastern Districts took the same course and preyed upon their brethren of Central and Lower Assam.<sup>1</sup>

I have already suggested that this large scale impressment, which was actually taking place at the time of the British arrival in 1825, can be accounted for by the very large coolie requirements of the Burmese armed forces moving back and forth between Assam and Burma.

It is probably true that the Kachins on Burmese instructions made deep slaves raids into central Assam on this account,<sup>2</sup> but this was a quite distinct activity from the "protection" of locally domiciled Assamese. Neufville however did not draw this distinction and being frustrated of the "captives" (who had presumably already left for Burma) he "released" the Assamese adherents of the Singpho

Of late years the Singpho have taken advantage of the weakness of the Assam Government and have carried their ravages with fire and sword beyond the capital, Rangpur, laying waste the whole countryside as far as Jorhath and carrying off the wretched inhabitants into slavery; both banks of the river have been swept by their depredations and the number of the captives said to have been carried off appears almost incredible. Of these the greater part have been sold to the hill Singphos, Khamptis, Shans etc., but many of those

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1. Mannay, 11, 42.

2. Peal (iv) 23.



retained for domestic and agricultural services in the Assamese lowlands were liberated by the advance of the British detachments.<sup>1</sup>

This action effectively wrecked the Singpho economy

"The Singphos themselves are so indolent and improvident that notwithstanding they have the most fertile soil in Assam and one that requires little labour to make it produce abundant crops and no rent to pay for it grain is always extravagantly dear and during several months in each year the people are reduced to subsist on yams and other roots found in the jungles. Almost the whole of their field work is performed by the women and slaves while the men delight in lounging about the villages and basking in the sun while not engaged in hunting and war."<sup>2</sup>

In pre-British days however the Singpho area was far from being a devastated area. Hannay notes that Burmese accounts of the invasion of Assam in 1817 show that the Burmese having crossed the Patkoi drew rice supplies for 12 days for an army of some 20,000 men from Mau-Mau-Dhun on the Noa Dihing near the foot of the Pangau Pass and justly concludes that this is a measure of very considerable Singpho prosperity.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Neufville (i) 138.
  2. Vetch (ii) 281. If in Vetch's time the Singpho were really half starving in the midst of plenty then it was certainly due to the removal of their slaves, but the prejudiced view that the Kachin is idle and degenerate is recurrent; see Anderson (ii) 137, Burma (iv), Robertson (i). The last may be quoted:-  
 "... the Kachin is in what I would call a degenerative condition....the people have got into a slack attitude with no interest in life and work or anything else... No proper farmer could lie on his back smoking opium with fields full of weeds...."  
 Efficiency is one thing, "degeneracy" is surely another at the time this observation was made the particular Kachins in question had a force of about 2000 men in the field fighting the Japanese, with little more than promises and congratulation by way of backing from outside sources.
  3. Hannay, ii, 43. Mau-Mau-Dhun is possible "Malaw Bru" - which in Tsasen is equivalent to Malaw Mung. Dan



Neufville himself is witness to the economic chaos that followed his arbitrary "release" of the Singphos' "slave-dependents."

The soil of the Assamese lowlands occupied by the Singphos is extremely fertile .....it yields two crops annually and is adapted in an admirable degree to rice cultivation.....The depopulation of the district and the predatory habits of its present occupants however have materially diminished cultivation and the greater part of the country is now overrun with the rankest jungle, - nor is this ever likely to be remedied under a considerable lapse of time, the assumption of the Assamese slaves having reduced the Singpho to the necessity of their own exertions in the raising or purchase of grain. to the former though attended with little comparative labour from the natural fertility of the soil the present generation seem very averse, never personally engaging in either pastoral or agricultural pursuits, which were conducted by the slaves who bore a proportion to their masters of at least 50 to 1."<sup>1</sup>

Yet even under the British there were outlying areas which had escaped too close attention by the slave releasers where prosperity was still possible. Thus in the more inaccessible parts of the Tangapani area.

The late Col White describes the Luttera country to be as well cultivated as many parts of Assam and this I can corroborate from what I saw of it in October 1839. This circumstance is of importance since it shows that if these, the Khakoo portion of the tribe have taken to agricultural habits there is a prospect of the tribe becoming industrious and useful subjects."<sup>2</sup>

Hannay very definitely links the development of wet rice cultivation among Kachin villages with the possession of "slaves."

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1. Neufville (1) 3 2
  2. Hannay, ii, 45.



Besides the jungle cultivation which is common to all, the Singphos in Hookung and Assam who are in the vicinity of low rice lands, and possess Assamese slaves cultivate the wet crops and in this case the soil is broken up with the common plough of Assam and buffaloes. A ploughshare, the manufacture of the Shans is however in use generally.<sup>1</sup>

and as a further demonstration of cultural interdependence he notes that the blacksmiths who made the ploughshares were largely Kachins, (almost certainly either Duleng or Nung),

Of late years many Kakoo blacksmiths have settled down in the plains of Assam with the Dhoonneas and are exceedingly useful when native blacksmiths are not to be had<sup>2</sup>

Finally Hannay reaches the conclusion that the much abused "slavery" was a popular institution

"I believe that many of their Assamese dependents under the denomination of Dhoonneas were attached to the Singpho life in Assam and in some cases to the persons of such chiefs as Lateo Gam and Gakhen Theo who exercised a patriarchal care of their dependents."<sup>3</sup>

The word Dooanya (Dhooonea, Dooaneah etc) like the word Mirl (Meree etc) merely means go between or interpreter,<sup>4</sup> their outstanding quality from the Assamese point of view being that they spoke Assamese as well as the language of their overlords. The Dooaniya were the dependents of the Singpho, the Mirl were the dependents of the Abor. Culturally

1. Ibid p.23.

2. Ibid.p.27

3. Ibid p.44.

4. Hunter (1)

Mackenzie (1) 544.



they were groups in transition as indeed were their overlords. Some indication of the lack of sharp distinction between the various groups concerned is indicated by the following examples:

Firstly as to the identity of the "Dooaniya". Butler's view was

"The Dooaneahs are descendants of Burmese or Singphoo fathers, from Assamese women, captured in predatory irruptions and kept as slaves. Assamese males also carried off into slavery, are, from the loss of caste by their connection with the Singphoos and the adoption of Singphoo habits, denominated Dooaneahs."<sup>1</sup>

Thirty five years later Peal has the following

"Several Duania villages were passed (on the Burhi Dihing) built more or less after the Singpho pattern, long sheds of bamboo, the floor raised on small posts. These people are the descendants of Assamese carried off by Singphos some 80 to 100 years ago and reduced to slavery. Many escaped during and after the Burmese wars and are now located about the Dihing river, speaking both Assamese and Singpho; - dressing like the former but having the gross superstitions of the latter."<sup>2</sup>

In this passage it will be noted Peal is writing of the Singpho as if they were a hill people from whom the Dooaniya escaped. Actually it is clear that the Dooaniya have stayed put on the Dihing and their Singpho "masters" have, between 1825 and 1880, withdrawn into the hills. But can we really make the distinction between Dooaniya and Singpho at all?

The younger Butler in 1873 makes a reference to the Altonia Shans in the following terms:

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1. Butler, (1) 126.
  2. Peal (1) 4.



"Itonias, - or Dhoannians as Brodie calls them although I believe they are really an offshoot of the Singphos."<sup>1</sup>

As already noted Hanson in 1912 refers to the Phakeal and Tarung Shan groups as "Darungs and Faquers who speak Singpho but are of mixed blood."<sup>2</sup> Hannay considered that Phake (Phakeal Itong (<sup>Aifonia</sup> ~~Autents~~)) and Bhamjang Shan groups were in 1846 "merging with the Assamese."<sup>3</sup> The clear evidence linking the Phakeal Shans with the Shans in the Hukawng subject to the Ningbyen Kachins has already been noted<sup>4</sup> and we have seen that many of them had returned to Burma before 1846. Those that remained in Assam were still Buddhist Shans in 1879 but only just

"The Bapu or Khamti yellow robed priest of Bor Phakeal used to teach all the lads to read and write he had now gone to Burma and might not return, and the boys could not all read.....Nagas are now seen in numbers and have boats villages and lands on the Bihing where there were formerly none. These people and the Duaniyas indeed seem to be getting more mixed up as time goes on." <sup>5</sup>

And <sup>were</sup> ~~when~~ the Singphos themselves of any more definite culture? Can religion be taken as a criterion? Neufville describes a Singpho mortuary ceremonial and illustrates a Singpho sacrificial post both of which appear well within the range of what might be described as standard Kachin

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1. Mackenzie (i) 87 quoting Butler (ii) Brodie was an official of the period 1935-46 see Selection of Papers.
  2. Hanson (v) 204.
  3. Hannay, ii, 10.
  4. See above p.17.
  5. Peal (i) 7.



practice.<sup>1</sup> But his general summary shows that even in 1825 the Singpho in the plain had already taken over many practices from their Shan neighbours and dependants

The religion of the Singphos appears to be a mixture of all the various idolatries and superstitions of the natives with whom they have intercourse. They seem to have no fixed principles common to the whole tribe. Their ostensible worship is that of Gudama (Gaudama) whose temples and priests are to be found in all the principle villages. They are also in the habit of deifying any Singphos who may chance to be killed in action during a foray.....and of sacrificing to them as their penates..<sup>2</sup>

This pattern of Buddhism combined with ancestor worship is already familiar from our comparative studies in the last chapter.

Butler noted that "the Shan is the written character used by the Singphos."<sup>3</sup> This is confirmed by H.L. Jenkins for in 1870 when he was endeavouring to cross into the Mwakung he was stopped at "Nanyoong" a village somewhere on the Patkol whose chief was "Ningroo Menoh" (Mingru Ma Naw). The latter received written instructions from the Seroj Gam (Sharaw Chief) to prevent Jenkins from proceeding further

The letter was written in Shan, the Singphos having no written character of their own. A Kamptee boy who came with us from Assam read out the contents.<sup>4</sup>

The inference from all this seems inescapable Although at the time of the British impact in 1825 the population

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1. Neufville (1) 341/3.

2. Ibid p.341. This passage is quoted verbatim by Butler (p.81 who would hardly have done so if it was inaccurate.

3. Butler (1) 80.

4. H.L. Jenkins, 11, 232.

of the Singpho plains tracts was far from being culturally homogeneous yet forces were already in operation tending to make the subject plainsmen more like their masters, and the overlord hillmen more like their subjects. Can we learn more about the structure of this dependent relationship?

The structure of the Assam Singpho community at village level.

Earlier in this chapter I gave some data indicating the composite cultural composition of Khampti "Villages" or Village clusters. The structure of Singpho community was very similar.

Pemberton quotes some figures supplied by Beesa Gam to Bruce about 1830 which were intended to show his effective military strength.<sup>1</sup>

Names of Caste of Beesa	No of Houses	No of Men	No of Muskets
Singphoes	2,000	8,000	70
Cacharee	100	240	-
Doonaseen	200	390	-
Meeshmee	190	250	-
Kuttuck	100	250	-
Choteea Meeree	20	45	-
Naga	200	500	-
Moresah	2	6	-

The figure for Singphoes may be disregarded; it doubtless bore the same relation to reality as the Buffa Gam's claim to Malcom that the "Singphoes amount to at least 300,000 souls,"<sup>2</sup>

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1. Pemberton (i) Tables.
  2. Malcom (i) Vol II, p. 201. Malcom met Buffa Gam in Ava in 1835/6.



but the other categories are interesting. They at least show the variety of the Beesa chief's dependants; and this was after 1825 when, according to Neufville, 3000 slaves had been released from the villages of the Beesa and Duffa Gam's alone!<sup>1</sup>

We have seen already that these various labels such as Gacharree (Kachari), Muttuck, Doonesah etc., certainly do not represent sharply differentiated cultural types. But the above table, we are told, was supplied by the Beesa chief himself; what then do these dependent tribal groups represent? I suggest that the Beesa Gam is in fact enumerating the component villages of a village cluster. Just as in the Hpalang community to which I have referred earlier, there were three Jinghpaw villages, an Atsi village, a Maru village, a Chinese village and so on, so I suggest the dependent community of a Singpho chief was composed of satellite villages of several different "cultural" and linguistic groups.

We cannot conclusively prove this but working on analogy we can postulate the following structure and consider how it fits the available evidence.

The immediate domain of each Singpho chief, - that is to say his village cluster would consist firstly of the chief's own core lineage, the kernel of which would be the

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1. Mackenzie (1) 63.

chief's own long house or "palace" (htinamu), the bulk of the occupants of which would be the chief's personal bond slaves (nayan). The rest of this village perhaps only ten houses or so in all would be Singpho - clan and affinal relatives of the chief and of other members of his core lineage. At a distance from the chief's village, perhaps even at a considerable distance from it, would be the other satellite villages <sup>which</sup> would be mainly if not entirely non-Singpho. Their dependence on the Singpho chief would be political, that is to say they would be "protected"; they would hold their land in fief from the chief and in return would pay to the chief some form of annual rent in kind, perhaps so many baskets of rice per household, perhaps some conventionally approved items of ritual value (hnaaa). On comparative grounds I think it probable that the headmen of dependent villages normally tended to become affinally related to the Chief or to other Singpho members of the core village. The individual satellite villages would tend towards a fairly high degree of endogamy and would preserve their appearance of cultural differentiation over a considerable period.

The type of dependence I am here indicating was not peculiar to the Kachins and their neighbours. It was general to the whole area. It was reflected in the myaa system in Burma to which some reference has already been made, and in the paik system in Assam. A brief explanation of this



latter system will help us to understand the dependent status of the Doonaiya vis a vis their Singpho masters.

"In Assam not only the soil but all the dwellers therefore were treated as being the property of the State. All the free population was divided according to caste or calling into khals or clans numbering from 1000 to 5000 able bodied men in each. The khals were subdivided into shots or three or four paiks or freemen each, and one paik or each shot was required to render personal service throughout the year to the Raja or any officer of the State to whom he might for that purpose be assigned. The Raja for his part allowed to each paik in the shot two poorahs of rice land; the land of the paik absent on service being cultivated for him by the rest of the shot. This allotment was known as gomutti or body land.

The paik also received a piece of land for garden and homestead bari free of assessment, in acknowledgement of which he paid one rupee annually either as house tax or poll tax or hearth tax as the custom of the district might determine land..... The Salaries of all government officers, favourites and retainers and the maintenance of the numerous religious institutions of Assam were provided for by assignments of paiks, along with their gomutti lands, to the persons to be benefitted"

The estates of the native gentry were universally formed in this way and were supplemented by the khats or lands which they themselves reclaimed from waste by slave labour and which were held by them rent free and as hereditary in their families.

The British government commuted all the paik service for an annual cash payment to the State of Rs 3/- per man and released the slaves; measures which however wise and proper in the abstract had the effect of reducing the native gentry to poverty and left no class either in fact or theory intermediate between the cultivator of the soil and the supreme authority.<sup>1</sup>

The implication from this seems to be that the unit of paiks that would be allotted at any one time would be a khal



How does this fit the village, village-cluster terminology of this book?

Buchanan (1810)<sup>1</sup> used the word much as Mackenzie does as the community representing 1,000 paik. But in its later use the term seems to have come to mean alternatively an exogamous lineage or else what in this book I call a village. Hutton in his work on the Angami says<sup>2</sup> that khel is "really an Assamese word signifying the exogamous division of the Ahom", while in The Khasi Nagas he writes<sup>3</sup> "khel was applied to Nagas first of all to signify an exogamous group, but came to be used regularly for part of a village inhabited in the Angami country by an exogamous group and hence for a division of any village, which in the same country is very rarely coterminous with an exogamous group"

Hutton seems to exaggerate the "exogamous" implications of the term. The two uses are not really inconsistent. We have seen already that the "village" (in my sense) starts as an exogamous core lineage and then by the accretion of more and more affinal sub groups tends ultimately to become endogamous rather than exogamous. In Kachin usage however the name of the village (Sakhaung) is very commonly the lineage name of the core lineage. This does not mean that all the members of that village are of the one lineage however. Except in very small villages the contrary is the case.

It seems probable that there was a similar ambiguity

1. Buchanan (1) 604.

(2) Hutton (1) 109

(3) Hutton (11) 121.



between kinship grouping and territorial grouping even in pre-British Assam. Butler has

"(The Ahoms) parcelled out the territory and subjected the population to a vassalage approximating to that in force under the feudal system in Europe. By this arrangement the whole body of cultivators were divided into different portions, called Rhels, varying from one thousand to five thousand cultivators each. They were governed by officers of varying grades: those called Borahs, possessing authority over twenty ghoats or sixty paiks; Sykeahs, over one hundred ghoats or three hundred paiks; and Buzarees over one thousand; with one superior officer denominated a Rheldar, who was generally a nobleman, or person connected with the royal family. But in recent times this arrangement has been modified, and Borahs, Sykeahs and Buzarees have exercised authority over a much smaller number of persons.<sup>1</sup>

A closely similar system prevailed in Burma but here too the theoretically neat subdivision into decimal sections was modified to fit the facts of territorial grouping.

In Upper Burma everyone belonged, or was supposed to belong either by birth or by marriage to a definite regiment or order.... These regiments or orders were called ghin or ay. There were two main divisions; the ghumian comprising all those classes liable to regular service in some public capacity, and the ghin comprising people who paid taxes but were not liable to regular service. The ghumian comprised two classes, those liable to military service and those liable to render personal service in some other form.....The military ghumian included myin (cavalry), thana (musketeers), myauk (artillery), hlan-dain (sappers), and dain (engineers). Of these various branches there were many regiments. The non military ghumian included the hereditary cultivators of royal lands (lamian), hereditary palace cooks (se-dan chet) and the hereditary palace sweepers (thunee dan lan). To most of these classes land was allotted for their residence (na myel) and their personal subsistence (na nye) and they might also be allotted land

for their residence (lok are) on which they paid rent or revenue to their captain.<sup>1</sup>

The Assam khel I suggest corresponded very closely with the athin or ay in Burma. Membership of the latter it will be noted was by birth or by marriage. The local sub-sections of an athin in any particular locality would thus have the structure of my "village" -- that is to say a core lineage with satellite households attached to it by marriage. Thus in the following quotations thwetauk corresponds to my "village" and the Kachin gabtawng, while the ywa or village corresponds to my "village cluster" or Kachin marang.

The Burmese military organization consisted of

5 soldiers	=	1 mess
2 messes	=	1 squad
5 squads	=	1 <u>thwetauk</u> or company
2 companies	=	1 <u>tat</u> or double company

each thwetauk was commanded by a thwetaukyi and each tat .... by a tatham or centurion. The division was like in the ancient Roman army based on a decimal system, or on tens and multiples of ten. Hence ywa ("villages") were grouped into ten or twenty thwetauk.

Some villages are still known as myin (cavalry) villages or thensat (musketeer) villages and their headmen as myinsawng or thwetauki; in Burmese times such officials did not have authority over all the people in the village but over those only who belonged to their own regiment.<sup>2</sup>

1. Furnivall, (iii), 30.
2. Taw Sein Ko (1) 302.
3. Furnival (iii) 30.



The nature of the Assam term khel is now clear.

Initially it corresponds closely with the Burmese term athin, and in this sense it is legitimate to say it means a clan; but it is also used for the localised subsection of a "clan", and here though it may have the name of a lineage group it is not really a kinship grouping at all but a section of a village cluster corresponding to the Burmese thwatauk.

The parallel between the Assamese and Burmese systems is not however complete for in Burma the athi who paid for their land in taxes were considered a lower class than the ahmudan who paid for land service, whereas in Assam there was only the one class of paik who paid for their land by service. In practice however the distinction was slight for the bulk of the paik appear to have commuted their service obligation into a tax payment. Thus the assignment of paik to a member of the Assam nobility was the practical equivalent of the assignment of Burmese athi villages to a myosa.

The point that specially interests us here however is that paik were assigned not merely to members of the Ahom nobility and provincial governors but also neighbouring hill chieftains.

The Dohgam (10 clan) Miris have a tradition that they came originally from an area between the Disang and the Naga Hills; also their traditions link them very definitely as adherents of the Ahoms. This suggests a paik allocation of Assamese to the Northern Abors .....(To day) the Hill Miris and the Plains Miris speak almost exactly the same language, while the language of

the Hill Miris is said to be identical with that of the Abora.<sup>1</sup>

Or again the following which refers to Nagas South of Subzagar:

"The Hill chiefs when the native government was strong came down annually bringing gifts that may perhaps be considered as tribute....It is certain that several of the chiefs had received grants of khats or lands and bheela or fishing waters on the plains and enjoyed assignments of paika like the ordinary Assamese nobility." <sup>2</sup>

We have no definite evidence that the lands and "Deoaniya" adherents of the Singpho and Khampti chiefs were held in this way but the Singpho certainly seem to have claimed that they were. After the insurrection of 1843 there was an enquiry in which the Sadiya agent at first reported that the cause was the loss of lands and slaves by the Singpho. The nature of the Agents second thoughts on the matter indicate the nature of the Beesa chief's claims

Captain Jenkins is now certain that the loss of lands had nothing to say to it. No lands had ever been granted to the Singphos or recognised as theirs or been claimed by any of them till lately when the Beesa, instigated by the Tippus Rajah set up such a notion.....The Agent in conclusion held that the loss of their slaves would soon compel the Singphos to settle down and engage personally in cultivation as many of them had already done, and then, he said, we could allot them definite lands and limits.<sup>3</sup>

Similarly in the case of the Khampti, Wilcox recounting the Khampti chiefs own version of how they came to be in Assam has

1. Mackenzie (1) 542. Quoting 1881 Census.

2. Ibid p.91

3. Ibid p.71.



The early settlements of the Khamtis when fifty or sixty years ago they first crossed the mountainous barrier at the head of the Dihing and procured the permission of the Assamese rajah to reside in his territories were here on the Fenga Fani<sup>1</sup>

From this I infer that the undoubted fact that the Singpho and Khampti chiefs in 1825 were "protecting or "dominating" a large number of villages of non Singpho and non Khampti population does not necessarily imply that they had acquired this status by brute force. It may well have been a legal and recognised political suzerainty. I also infer that the subject groups were organised into communities called khels corresponding to what in this book I call villages, - that is a culturally uniform group to some extent endogamous,<sup>2</sup> with a kinship structure such as has been described in Chapter 3 and a marked tendency for the headman's lineage to establish affinal relationship with the kinsfolk of his political overlord.

Let us consider the evidence. Mackenzie refers to the local units of Singpho community as cantons<sup>3</sup>, Dalton calls them khella.<sup>4</sup> I assume that each canton is in my

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1. Wilcocks (1) 358. (my *italics*)

2. In Kurdistan, Persia and the North West Frontier area generally khel means a clan segment, especially in a tribe of nomads. See Leach (1). Since such segment and kinship significance. How the word came to be imported into Assam in the first place is not clear.

3. Mackenzie, (1) 63.

4. Dalton, (1)

terminology one village of a village cluster. In most cases in the plains part of the Singpho area, the Singpho villages would be "core" villages with satellite villages that were non Singpho. In other cases the "thigh eating chief's" core village might have one or two Satellite Singpho villages and also other non-Singpho satellite villages

In 1838 White made a serious attempt to estimate the total Singpho population in the Assam border areas. His original report is untraced but Dalton's report of 1853, being a revision of White's report, indicates to some extent what the former contained.<sup>1</sup>

It appears that in 1838 there were 38 khell headmen or chiefs living in 17 "Villages" who had signed an act of submission in 1826<sup>2</sup> and a further 22 Khells living in an unspecified number of "Villages" who had not signed. By 1853, of the 38 Khells first mentioned 14 had migrated to Burma or become extinct, and one had settled near Dibrugarh and become absorbed among the Assamese. One new Khell had arrived from beyond the Burma Frontier in 1852 and settled near Sainkwhah. The khell names are listed in recognisable lineage name forms, e.g. Gukheng (Gacheng), Lattow (Lahtaw), Nihkeom Nisang (N'Khumshang), Phoosyang (Pyungin) and so

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1. Dalton, 1.

2. The act of submission is quoted in full in Butler (1), 62/64 and also Atcheson Vol.1, Article CIV and CV. See also Appendix II to this book. The name BAM which heads the list of signatory chiefs Beesa Bawn which was the proper name of Beesa Gam.



on end we can safely say that these are villages in the sense of Chapter 3 and that they are Singpho and not "Dooaniya" villages. Dalton's "Villages" however are mostly listed under the names of rivers, e.g., Tengah Pani, Fokan Pani, Tirrap Pani and so on. Since the economy of the Singphos, unlike that of the "typical" Kachins described in Chapter 3, was based on wet and not dry rice cultivation, the settlements or "village clusters" would be aligned not along hill ridges but along river courses. It appears therefore that Dalton's "villages" are comparable to my village clusters and one may infer that although Government took the precaution of getting every Singpho village headman to "sign on the dotted line" only a proportion of these were "thigh eating chiefs" in the Kachin sense. Mackenzie says that in 1826, apart from the Beesa Gaum, 16 out of 28 known Singpho chiefs submitted and the Beesa Gaum was put in charge of them.<sup>1</sup> Pemberton says that "the Beesa Gaum is chief over the undermentioned Gaums" and lists 18 other names.<sup>2</sup> The actual treaty of 1826<sup>3</sup> after listing in its preamble the first sixteen of the 38 signatories has "etc". From this I conclude that within the three mung already described, there were in all some 16 to 18 principal chiefs (du ni) who had

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1. Mackenzie (1) 64.

2. Pemberton (1) Tables.

3. See Appendix II.

submitted to Government (and also some others who had not) and that there were in addition within the administered area some 20 Singpho village headmen (salana ni), subordinate to the du ni. Since the treaty is signed in the personal name of the signatory only without indicating his lineage name, e.g., Joe, Jowrah, Chow, Chowrah, Chowdeo, Chowkan<sup>1</sup> etc., we cannot determine from the document alone which were the dominant 17 du bay lineages.

But in addition to villages under Singpho salana ni there were also, in the same areas - as the map and records show -, Phaksal, Aitonia, Dooaniya etc., villages, and these certainly, until the British interfered were subject to the Singpho chief.

White's estimate of total Singpho population was 6000, which is an average of 100 persons per khel. On a basis of 5 per household this gives an average village size of 20 households. But although census studies have since shown that over the Kachin hills generally the average household is about 5 persons, it was formerly presumed that because Kachin houses are very long, households much also be very large, and White may well have estimated at 10 or more per house which would make the village size smaller. The partial census of 1871 quoted by Mackenzie gave 3435

1. In modern spelling ~~Zan, Zanna, Zan, Zan ha Zan Tu, Zan Sam~~  
Zan is the same as the Shan sao and is merely an honorific meaning "Prince."

Zan, Zan La, Zan, Zan La, Zan Tu, Zan Gam



persons in 48 khals divided among 18 settlements<sup>1</sup> which is much the same distribution as that given by Dalton in 1853<sup>2</sup> and implies a Khal average of 70 persons, some khals no doubt being much smaller than this and some larger.

It will be noted that there is nothing here to support the thesis that under the warlike conditions prevailing before the establishment of Pax Britannica Kachin villages must have been large simply from considerations of self defence,<sup>3</sup> though it is of course possible that the breakdown to this relatively small size of village community had occurred after 1825. Wilcox's<sup>4</sup> account of his journey to Hkamti Long when he was passing through entirely "untouched" country supports the view that the normal Singpho village was small.

From about longitude 96 eastwards Wilcox passed the following Singpho villages all situated on the Upper Diging:-  
 Seyong, Kasan, Gakhen, Lugo, Pishi, Ku,ku, Pash La, Lajong,  
 Imbong Kusar, Tunong Tikrang  
 He gives the size of some of them

Gakhen	- "a little village"
Lugo	- "5 or 6 houses"
Kumku	- "8 or 10 large houses"
Pash La	- "a new village of 6 or 8 houses."

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1. Mackenzie (1) 71.

2. Dalton (1),

3. This dogma formed part of the official justification for the arbitrary amalgamation of villages and the "Sinlun Kachin Regeneration Scheme" from 1938 onwards. See Burma (iv) 1937/38.

4. Wilcox (1) 413/419.

Though situated in a narrow gorge these villagers seem to have cultivated wet rice wherever possible. Imbong Kusar was "situated in the midst of a fine little cultivated plain." At Pasi La

There is excellent ground for rice cultivation on the perfect flats of the steppes and for grain requiring a drier soil they have cleared a part of the hill where the slope is full thirty degrees<sup>1</sup>

Existence was clearly "marginal". At Kusku "20 or 30 seers" of rice was all that could be collected

I offered triple payment in kind at Sadiya or a large price in money but they seemed really unable to supply me, for their poverty would have inclined them to accept my offer though amongst the Singphos it would be considered barbarous inhospitality to suffer a traveller to pay for his food.<sup>2</sup>

It will be observed that this poverty stricken Upper Dihing community was almost exclusively Singpho. There is no mention of any Bodoaniya or Assamese villages. But later on the edge of the Putao plain Wilcox passes through "the deserted Mishmi village of Aleth....the people (formerly under the Bura Raja of Munchi) have been chiefly removed to the Tungen rivulet under the influence of the Singphos."<sup>3</sup> The "Tungen rivulet" is earlier mentioned as near Lugo.<sup>4</sup> So that even here the Singphos were in process of acquiring adherents.

Further into the plain on the Tenga Poni, Burhi Dihing and Nua Dihing rivers, the Singpho core villages were no

1. Ibid p.419. 66 years later Errol Gray (p.223) says of Bishi (Pishi) "The Singphos here grow very few dry crops; the sal rice on irrigated land is what they chiefly depend on. But there is no indication of village size.

2. Ibid p. 415 (3) Ibid p.445 Munchi - Mansai (4) Ibid .414



larger than elsewhere but each had acquired satellite dependencies which made the economic group very much larger. The scale of the pre-British groupings are impossible to estimate owing to the spasmodic slave releasing activities of the British authorities. The following comment is dated 1842

"Beesa is a village of only 20 houses and some 200 inhabitants, the chief never having recovered his importance since the destruction of his former village by the Duffa Gun in 1834 which caused several hundreds of his best Bonneah followers to leave him and settle..... in the village of the Set Gun."1

This brings out that the dependent "Dooaniya" were organised independently of the Singphos as village communities so that when allegiance was transferred from one chief to another the Dooaniyas moved as a group and not as individuals. This particular transfer was not necessarily very significant since the Set (Let, Lat) chief seems to have been an adherent of the Beesa.

On the face of it it would appear that the hold of the Singpho chiefs over their non-Singpho adherents, being merely "protective" and dependent on prestige, would inevitably fade out as soon as the British asserted their authority as paramount power, whether or not active steps were taken to break up the Singpho political hierarchy through "slave release!"

1. Vetch (11) 279.

Significantly Hannay also specified the Duffa Gam's raid on the Beesa as the critical date for the decline in Singpho prestige. It happens also to be the date (1835) when the decision to go ahead with Assam tea production was finally made, so that it is the date from which British strength really began to manifest itself.

From that time there had been a gradual falling off in power and influence of all the Singpho chiefs of the Nao and Boree Dihing frontier the remaining Assamese and other dependents leaving them as opportunity offered, until many chiefs who before possessed hundreds to cultivate their lands were left without means of subsistence.<sup>1</sup>

Vetch describes the "village of the Bet Gam, adjoining to Beesa" which as noted above contained "several hundred" Dooniyas, thus:-

"The stockade is circular in form with a strong breastwork behind. The houses are built in a circle facing outwards while there is a smaller stockade in the centre where the chief has his houses."<sup>2</sup>

This is an unusual ground plan but it illustrates admirably the principle of a core village with appendages.

We have already seen that when the dust of battle from the Pyisa-Daiphu conflict had settled down the dominant Tsason lineage in the Mwakawng turned out to be Sharaw, and also that the Beesa chief nominated a Sharaw (Seroo La Mein) to be his successor as paramount. Evidently the Sharaw chief

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1. Hannay, II, 44.  
2. Vetch (II) 279.



in Assam managed to hang on to his adherents longer than anyone else. Vetch remarks

Seiro (i.e., Sharaw) is a village of some 500 inhabitants, the largest and best built village I have met with....possessing an extensive street and remarkably fine rice cultivation.<sup>1</sup>

The direct correlation between community size, wet rice cultivation, and general affluence is to be noted. What proportion of Seiro's 500 inhabitants were Doanliya we do not know. But there were certainly some. Vetch reports on a case where the defendant was a Singpho

"It appears that the Doanneah, his wife, and brothers had escaped from the Hookong and settled at Seiro where they were employed by the defendant as cultivators and that one day his (the Doanneah's) wife in a fit of rage accused her husband of having criminal intercourse with the defendant's wife and that he without further proof had him bound and sent off to be sold (to the Kishneesa)<sup>2</sup>

#### The comparable situation in the Mwakang Valley.

This Assam situation may be compared with the situation observed by Hannay and Bayfield in the Mwakang Valley in 1835/7.

In, 1836, as now, the areas of wet paddy cultivation seem to have corresponded to those of dense population. Alternatively it might be said that the overall density is

1. Ibid p. 278.

2. Ibid p. 279.

very low but that where there are substantial areas of wet paddy it is relatively dense. Today the principle wet paddy areas are in the Walawbum-Lalewag-Maingkwan triangle and also in the Htaumaja tract and in a small pocket to the south east near the headwaters of the Tanai Hka.<sup>1</sup> These localities are renowned for their productivity and produce a surplus of rice which is traded to neighbouring hill areas. Over the rest of the valley the wet paddy plots are small and scattered and are worked in conjunction with shifting dry rice taungya. In many localities opium is the main crop and is traded to wet paddy cultivators, - especially the Shans around the Maingkwan, for rice. The area has a number of other natural resources notably amber, alluvial gold, and (for a brief period towards the end of the 19th Century) wild rubber.<sup>2</sup> The trade activities connected with the jade mining industry slightly to the south also have their repercussions on the affairs of the valley.

Up to 1824 the Hukawng Valley had been considerably used as a regular trade route between Assam and Burma,

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1. Kawi Ma Nawng Chapter VIII. passion. passim.

2. Stettell passion. passim.



and even in 1835 was probably less cut off from the outside world than it was 80 years later.<sup>1</sup>

The present population of the Mukaung is about 7,500<sup>2</sup> so that the release of 3400<sup>3</sup> slaves in 1926/8<sup>3</sup> represented the removal of almost a third of the population and a very much higher proportion of the working adults. It is hardly surprising therefore that the economy of the Mukaung in 1941 was in much the same disrupted state as that of Singpho Assam in 1835. In 1913, though little known, the Mukaung was generally regarded as the most prosperous and civilised part of the Kachin Hills area.<sup>4</sup>

It is noticeable however that in 1835, as now there

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1. Hanny, 1, p.103 lists the following as available at Maingkwan in 1835.

"The following is the list of British piece goods now selling at Maingkwan: Common book muslin used as headresses Rs 14/- a piece; coarse broadcloth worn as shawls 2½ yds. long Rs 18/- each; good cotton handkerchiefs Rs 4/- a pair and coarse ones Rs 2½ a pair. These are the prices of goods bought at Ava but what similar articles bought in Assam may cost I cannot ascertain... The merchants who come to this valley from the Burman territories are natives of Yo (i.e., Yaw) and the man who is now selling goods here has frequently visited Calcutta ..... The greatest part of British and Burman manufactures which are used in this valley are brought from Megauing by Sino merchants but I understand that within the last few years several of them have gone to Assam with gold dust, ivory and a little silver for which they receive in return muskets, cloth, spirits and opium.

2. Unpublished 1941 Census figure.
3. See Chapter 3 p.77
4. Hanson (iv)



was a marked lack of manpower. Only a few favourable localities were at all fully developed and here the main labour force was non Singpho. We have seen already that this was attributed at the time to the "exactions of the Burmese". The Singphos for their part seem to have done their best to import "slave" labour. When they were deprived of the Assamese source they took to raiding the Negas. In a similar way, as we shall see in the next Chapter, they took positive, if rather drastic, steps to populate the rice plains near Maigna near the Irrawaddy confluence. Bayfield's route took him through Walawbum and Maing<sup>n</sup>khwan but was otherwise outside the main wet paddy areas. Rice was relatively plentiful in Walawbum and Maingkhwan and elsewhere extremely scarce. His comments of the various villages may be noted.

Walobhoom (Walawbum) ... it contains thirty barrack like houses ... 5 or 6 of them are 20 to 50 yards long ... there are some 150 to 200 assamese slaves here and probably not more than a third of that number of their Singpho masters.

Tainlon (Tsinlung probably Daipha Ga) "This is the Duffa Gam's residence it is no better in any respect than the other villages I have seen. It is divided into two stockades, the larger includes 15 houses and the smaller 6, containing together about 200 people ..... The Duffa Gam has about 50 Assamese slaves.

Lamoung (Lamawn Ga) described as consisting of two parts some distance apart, the smaller consisting of six houses and not stockaded. The main village is described as Mirip (Marip) and the smaller as "connected to the Duffa by marriage."



Kaliyang 10 houses.

Shillingkhyet (Sarangkhyet) "5 or 6 houses on a branch of the Prong Prong Kha ... there are but 5 Assamese slaves here ... An hour later reached the village of Shillingkhyet on the right bank of the same nullah of which the former village is an offshoot .... This village consists of 14 or 15 houses divided into two portions which are not stockaded ... Perhaps there are not more than 100 people of all classes and ages.

Magwegoun (Magwegoun) "is a stockaded village of 12 houses."

In several of these cases the "village cluster" structure of the local community is very clearly indicated. What is also clear is not only the greater size but also the more densely aggregated community that appears in the case of Malawbum - the only one of these villages in a main rice producing locality.

#### Forces of integration in a culturally composite Community.

Let us now return to the Assam field and consider the implications of the structural picture I have presented.

The picture is of a series of "core lineages" of Singpho origin under Singpho chiefs; around the simple villages of these chiefs, mostly quite small in size - 5 to 10 houses let us say - are clustered the villages of other dependent lineages. A few of these also are Singpho in ethnic composition but the majority are Assamese and "Dooanceesh". The overall picture is of an Assamese

population with hers and there small Singpho villages; the Singphos being the landlords of the whole area. In the initial formative stage of such a structure the Assamese are simply mayam - refers to the Singpho paying a rental in labour and kind to their masters but outside the ritual and kinship organisation of the latter. At a later integrative stage intermarriage between the dependent lineages and the core lineages bring the whole into closer cultural unity and the dependent lineages emerge as Doonessahs with a status of much greater independence than that of the mayam. We have already noted Butler's definition of a Doonessah as "the descendants of Burmese or Singpho fathers and Assamese women" (1) elsewhere the same authority tells us that the "Singpho ..... make no distinction between the children born of Singpho women and those born of foreign or Assamese women" (2) Bayfield too, in touring in the Hukwang noted that the Ningbyen Chief's mother had been an Assamese slave. (3) Vetch's observation, already quoted, that the Doonessah followers of the Beesa Gaum had removed themselves and attached themselves to his neighbour the Let Gaum also indicates that the status of a Doonessah was as least as

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1. Butler (1) 126.

2. Butler (1) 83.

3. Bayfield, (1) 224.



independent as that of an ordinary Singpho commoner.

The difference between such a structure and that which was described in Chapter 3 as the modal or "typical" Kachin pattern would be simply in the scale of community, - in the size of the working group. In the typical Kachin pattern the proportion of aristocrats to commoners is high; fission is repeated; the total village cluster community is small. In contrast under the Assam conditions the proportion of commoners and serfs to aristocrats is high, the tendency to fission is reduced, the size of the working community is much increased and is thereby better adapted to the efficient development of wet paddy cultivation, a peculiarity of which, as we have seen, is the periodic demand for a high labour density. Politically, provided fission is avoided, such a system is stable; the structure indeed is that of a Shan State in miniature.

If my analysis is correct we have evidence here of the actual occurrence in the Singpho field in the period 1750 - 1850 of a series of changes of the fluxional type indicated as theoretically probable in preceding chapters, a type of change that is inherent in the relation of the social structure to its economic environment and entirely independent of "Western" influence.

The position of the Chief in the "typical" Kachin society is such that in many respects he may be compared

to the entrepreneur capitalist in our western economy. His opportunities for personal aggrandisement are however restricted by several factors. In the first place ritual obligations to his fellows imply that there can be little difference in wealth status as between Chief and commoner; in the second place in the hills areas the surplus product of labour is negligible. Food is so difficult to raise that practically the whole labour effort of the population is devoted to producing immediate necessities and there can be no accumulation of capital. Movement into a plains area provides the economic opportunity for capital accumulation, but the ritual restrictions remain. The chief has no incentive to exercise his entrepreneur functions because ritual obligations prevent him getting any undue share of the spoils. This position is overcome if the proportion of mayam ("slaves") to commoner aristocrats can be increased because to a large extent the mayam are not integrated into the ritual system. Thus when the Kachins moved into the Hukawng they could only have exploited the wealth of the new environment to the full if they had combined into large villages. They did not do so because the equalitarian traditions suitable to a hill environment prevented any particular chief achieving the personal ascendancy necessary to impose such aggregation. Instead they remained divided in small lineage groups and relied on the acquisition of additional



mayam to exploit their new lands; and, mayam being hard to come by, development was very slow. In Assam on the other hand while the immediate environmental conditions were similar to those of the Hukawng, there was the contrast that a labouring population external to the existing ritual order was immediately available. Such a population could for a while be "exploited" in the sense that the chiefs, as entrepreneurs, could initiate enterprise which would raise their own wealth standards out of proportion to that of their adherents. So long as the mayam remained outside or partially outside the ritual system the wealth of a chief would be directly proportional to the number of Assamese adherents he could collect around him. Such a system however would be itself unstable since there must be powerful forces at work tending to reintegrate the working population and the exploiting Singpho into one ritual system. The nature of such a new "amalgamated" society must depend upon the pattern of the ritual system that emerges. I have suggested that where the components of the amalgamated society are what I have labelled Kachins and Shans then the ritual pattern that emerges in a plains environment, whatever be the original proportion of the components, is Buddhist and the pattern of the new society Shan.

In short, the argument is that if the British had not appeared on the scene in 1825 then the Singphos and their

Doaneeah followers would have coalesced into a single ritual and political structure and would have come to form elements of one or more "States" organised on Shan lines. In the process the characteristic features of Singpho religion which permit every du baw lineage to regard itself as of equal status to any other would disappear and in its place some religious system more consistent with a centralised and hierarchical system of government would have emerged.

This is not mere theoretical speculation. Already in Chapter V I have quoted examples of Shan type "States" in which Buddhism had been adopted alongside the older ~~traditional~~ <sup>trad</sup> ancestor worship, and we have seen that independent Buddhist church hierarchy possibly served to reinforce the segmentary political structure of the elementary feudal organisation. Moreover we have practical evidence that in 1825 changes were taking place in the traditional Singpho structure which would serve to consolidate the local grouping and prevent further fission and that along with these changes the society was being converted to Buddhism. The latter circumstance would appear entirely arbitrary without the explanation I have just given.

The first point to be noted is not so much one of religion as of law. The uma rule of inheritance whereby the land and title to the ancestral home go to the youngest



(1)

son has disappeared. The land and title now go to the eldest son and the youngest son gets the movable property. This in itself indicates a new orientation towards permanent settlement and accretion in one locality rather than persistent fission by the elder branches of the lineage. Secondly we

have it on Kawlu Ma Nawng's authority that the Tsasen alone among the major Kachin clans have no Madai nat ritual. As

(2)

was pointed out earlier the Madai ritual provides the mechanism by which the surplus wealth that accrues to a chief by virtue of his position is periodically disposed of for the benefit of the community. The Madai ritual may serve to increase personal prestige, but it prevents the accumulation of a disproportionate amount of individual capital resources. The elimination of the Madai ritual among the Tsasen would in this respect have the same effect as conversion to Christianity. The Christian Chief freed from the heaviest of

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2) Neufville(1) 340; McCosh (1) 151. Wide variety in details of inheritance systems can prevail in a small area. See Stevenson (vi) 167/173. Stevenson codifies these Chin variants as if they implied rigid principles of law and may thereby have altered the trend of development. To an outsider unfamiliar with the Chin the variants recorded all appear to be transitional forms away from a common theme of ultimogeniture which appear common to all. Tsasen (Singpho) practice was a deviant from the Kachin pattern in the same sense.

3) Kawlu Ma Nawng (1) 10.

4) Chapter 3.

his ritual obligations finds his personal wealth expanding in geometrical progression. <sup>(1)</sup> The Tsasen chief without the Madai ritual would, I argue, have just those capitalist opportunities which the hill chiefs lack.

I have already given evidence that the Singpho of 1825 were already formally Buddhist. The process of religious integration towards the Shan pattern was not confined to the Singpho, but was taking place among the other hill tribes on the fringe of the Sadiya Khampti domain. Wilcox touring in the Mishani <sup>mi</sup> country north east of Sadiya remarks <sup>(2)</sup> "the only sign of population that we saw on our journey were parties of priests (Khemtis) moving from one village in the jungles to another."

What is rather more surprising is that the process of conversion to Buddhism continued among all the Singphos of the plains area even after disaster had overwhelmed both the Khampti and Singpho chiefs.

After the punitive reprisals of 1843 the Singpho generally seem to have reached a very low ebb. Dalton in 1853 reported

"The Singphos have become desperate opium eaters and this and the loss of their slaves who have almost all effected their escape have reduced them

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2. Wilcox (i) 3 & 5.

1. There are numerous examples of this to be observed in the Sinpraw portion of the Kachin Hills.



to very low conditions. They scarcely cultivate sufficient grain for their own subsistence but wandering about the wild country as elephant hunters they supply most of their wants by the sale of elephant tusks." (1)

A similar fate befel the Khamptis. After the rebellion of 1839, 900 of them were deported to an area farther down the Brahmaputra; others continued in spasmodic rebellion until 1843 when they were finally "broken up" and dispersed to four widely separated settlements in different parts of Assam. According to Mackenzie these were mostly absorbed into the general Assamese population. Most of the 3930 Khampti recorded in the 1871 Census were in Mackenzie's view the descendants of recent immigrants who had arrived in Assam after 1843, but he adds

"Besides these there are four khels known as Monglung Panangpan, Chamangthee and Manoh who live with the Singphos and have the same relations with the Government as the Singphos. They number it is estimated 400 souls ... The Khamtis have taken to agriculture to some little extent".(2)

The Singpho meanwhile seem to have recovered their morale to a slight extent.

"The Singphos have settled down to agriculture and do now for themselves what formerly they depended on their Assamese slaves to do for them. They apparently however only cultivate sufficient to meet their own need for a portion

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1. Dalton, (1) lxxxiv.
  2. Mackenzie (1) 59.

of the year, the remaining months they live upon wild yams and other jungle products." (1)

Ritually and culturally the tendency still seems to have been for the Khampti and the Singpho to become one. We have seen that the Assam Census authorities in 1911 regarded the Singpho as "a tribe of Shans". We have seen that Hansen regarded the Phakeal and Tarung Shans as Singpho. Ritually the Shan pattern prevailed. In 1887 Macgregor reports on a Khampti-Singpho joint settlement on the Upper Dihing called Munglung." At another village of which the great majority of the inhabitants were Singphos (who are by religion spirit worshippers) we found a Buddhist temple and school which had been erected principally through the generosity of the headman who was a Singpho. This was a quite exceptional instance of unsectarian conduct." (2)

The state of affairs was thus described in the 1921 Census.

The Singphos .... there are only 12 or 14 small villages on the Noa Dihing river and up to the Dibrugarh boundary. ... their condition is inferior even to that of the Khamtis. They have all more or less adopted Buddhism but also continue sacrifices to the spirits. (3)

1. Ibid p.72.

2. Macgregor, ii, p.19.

This Munglung appears to be distinct from the Munglung mentioned by Mackenzie above.

3. Census of India 1921 Vol.III. Assam Pt.1. Report Appx B. p.xiii.



It seems doubtful whether by this time the distinction in this area between Singpho and Khampti represents anything more substantial than a difference of dialect and dress.

While all these reports are of conversion to Buddhism, they refer only to those groups which (had the British not interfered) would have been under the centralising influence of Sadiya. It is possible that those who were linked with Muttuck might have preferred to adopt some form of Hinduism. The son of the old Ningru chief for instance seems to have aspired to become an Assamese Rajah. Dalton in 1853 reported of him "(Ningru) Chamun is active and intelligent and can write Bengallee. He aspires to a leading position among the clans". In 1893 Errol Gray notes that "Ningro Samon calls himself a Rajah and has considerable influence over his people", but it is clear from the further description of his house and village that he was still a very ordinary Kachin; the cultural segregation imposed by the British prevented him from becoming anything else.

Ritual as a force of political integration:- An example from the Hukawng Valley 1836

That the dual organisation described earlier for the case of the Tawngpeng State is not merely a chance variant

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1. Dalton, (1) p lxxxix
  2. Errol Gray p.222

but a definite pattern of the type of religious structure that develops when a primitive hill society "graduates" into a political organisation on a somewhat larger scale is indicated by an extremely interesting ritual procedure (1) observed by Hannay in 1835. It will be remembered that the Burmese had only subjugated Mogaung about 1799. Prior to that time the Mukaung, theoretically anyway, was part of the Mogaung Dominion. Likewise Assam, under the Ahoms, (2) was regarded as a colony of Mogaung, as also was the Khampti territory in the Futas area. It is unlikely that the Mogaung Princes exercised any practical authority either in Assam or in Khamti Long but that was the ideology of the structure. The Burmese as successors to the Mogaung Princes, were the heirs also of their "mythologues". These

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1. Hannay (i) and Hannay (ii), give nearly identical accounts. My quotations are from both sources.
2. For mythology of this link see Buchanan (i) 600; Elias (ii); Cochrane (i) 18. These stories centre round two ancestral heroes Khun Tai and Khun Lai (Hkun Lu and Hkun Lai) who had gods Chung and Cheng (Sung and Seng). Buchanan's Assam story makes Mogaung - called Mora - colonised from Assam; Elias' story collected from Mong Mao reverses the process. After a quarrel between the two brothers at Mong Mao, the elder "putting his gods Sung and Seng upon his head" ... "went to the Upper reaches of the Chindwin and there founded a Kingdom." Hannay's three nats "who lived in three small temples made of bamboo and carried on men's shoulders" may be compared.



mung nats were the spirits of "three brothers, the founders of the Moonkong (Mogaung) and Assam dynasties"; their names were "Chow Fya Hoceng, Chow Sue Kapha, Chow Sam Loung Hue Moon".<sup>(1)</sup> They were supposed to be kept in one of the monasteries of Mogaung, from whence they were brought out on all occasions of State ceremony or when expeditions were undertaken. In the latter event they might accompany the expedition and their spiritual persons were then placed "in three small temples made of bamboo and carried on men's shoulders". The Burmese governor of Mogaung whom Hannay accompanied was proceeding to the Hukawng in order to obtain an oath of allegiance from the recalcitrant Kachin chiefs; he therefore took the mung nats with him. It need not surprise us therefore that the Kachin Chiefs who made their submission swore allegiance not to the King of Burma but to the mung nats of Mogaung!

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1. Chow Sue Kapha. Buchanan makes Chukapha son of Khun Tai. Some versions make Sookapha the founder of the Ahom dynasty. Cochrane on cit. 23 has Chow-ka-hpa Chow Sam Loung Hue Moong of the legendary Sao Sam Lon Mong the Mogaung Sawbwa who is supposed to have founded the "Paklong" dynasty in Hkamti long cf. also the brothers Kae Hkan Hpa and Hkun Sam Long - "Prince of Mong Kung (Mogaung) in Elias account which makes them the conquerors and creators of the new Shan "Empire."

The ceremony commenced by killing a buffalo which was effected with several strokes of a mallet and the flesh of the animal was cut up to be cooked for the occasion. Each Tschua (Sawbwa) then presented his sword and spear to the spirits of the three brothers Tchuas of Moengkong who are supposed to accompany the Governor of the above named place and to inhabit three small huts which are erected on the edge of the camp. Offerings of rice, meat etc. were made to these ngaps or spirits and on this being done each person concerned in taking the oath received a small portion of rice in his hand and in kneeling posture with his hands clasped above his head the oaths read in both the Shan and Burmese languages. After this the paper on which the oaths were written was burned to ashes and mixed with water, when a cupful of the mixture was given to each of the Tschuas to drink who before doing so repeated the assurance that they would keep the oath. The ceremony was concluded by the chiefs all sitting down together and eating out of the same dish. The chieftains to whom this oath of forbearance was administered were the Thoogyee (thugyi) of Meingkhwon (Meingkhwan), a Shan, the Duffa Sam, a Tessa Singpho, the Panwa Tschua, a Laphase (Lahpai) Singpho, the Situngyen Saum and Wingkong Moung, Mirip Singpho, and Tarepoung Moung a Tessa Singpho all of whom by this act virtually acknowledged the supremacy of the Burmese authorities and their own Subjugation to the Kingdom of Ava.

Thus the Buddhist Burmese use the traditional association of lineage ancestors to their lands as an instrument for the justification of political expansion. Yet who can doubt that if the Burmese had in fact ever consolidated their hold upon the Mukuang they would have brought its inhabitants within the fold of the State religion? And if we are to believe Kawlun Ma Nwung the process was actually under way before the British annexation destroyed the structure of the Burmese Buddhist Church.

Meingkhwan village was formerly made up of four or



five small and scattered villages. In the lifetime of the Payindwin Sayadaw, a famous Buddhist priest in that area, these villages were amalgamated by his efforts and the present large village constituted. The priest did not limit his activities to the Shans of the valley; he toured the whole area, even the hills, preaching the evils of animism. It is as a result of his efforts that there are pagodas venerated by the people near many of the Kachin villages. The good work this priest did in the Mwakawng Valley was so appreciated by the people that it is said they used to meet him at their tract boundaries and carry him to his destination. He is said to have died when on a visit to Wunzu Manle at Manle village. The word of this priest was implicitly believed by both Shans and Kachins in the Valley. (1)

#### Economic relations within culturally composite communities.

I have already indicated that the political relationship between the Singpho chief and their non-Singpho followers was expressed in terms of economic obligation. Unfortunately we have no details of the form and scale of these obligations beyond the rather general statement that the Doonliya cultivated the lands of their Singpho masters. The obligations concerned were not necessarily expressed in the crude form of a rental for land. It is possible, indeed likely, that kinship and semi-ritual obligations were also involved. The case of the Lagawin Chief and his Naga dependents cited in Chapter 3 is a case in point.

Comparative material from Assam in the 1830 period gives us a fair indication of the probable type of transaction

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1. Kawi Ma Nawn (1) 49. No dates are given.

that was involved.

At the time of the British occupation of Assam the Hill tribes of the whole northern fringe of the province, known variously as Booteahs, Dufflas, Akhas and Abors had a relationship with the plains communities immediately adjacent to them very similar to that described for the Singphos. Just as the Singphos had their dependent Boomeahs, so the Abors had their Miri, and the Akhas, Dufflas and Booteahs their Bohoteahs.

The term Bohoteah in point of fact was a general term for groups of Paiks who had been assigned to Assamese noblemen and similar persons of rank.

The king had the power to grant to his nobles and spiritual advisers portions of the free population as slaves, which the owner could dispose of in any manner he thought proper: they were designated Bohoteahs. (1)

If I am correct in thinking that the bulk of the Singphos' "Assamese slaves" were assigned paiks of this kind then the comparison with the Duffla situation is very relevant.

The Administrative policy with respect to these "slave adherents" of hill groups varied according to circumstance. In the case of the Singphos no systematic

1. Butler.

(1) 145.



policy of segregation was originally contemplated, the "slaves" were released simply because to own slaves was immoral, and expropriation of land only set in some years after Administrative policy had taken its initial form. The Miris on the other hand were in land in which Government had no particular interest and they seem to have been left alone until 1847; I will return to them in a moment. The Bohoteans of the Dufflas, Akhar and Eoteahs on the other hand lived in the "Dooars", land eminently suitable for tea cultivation. We find therefore in this area that from 1835 onwards Government is engaged in expropriating the rights of the hill peoples in their plains territory; rather surprisingly the hill groups are in nearly every case compensated by means of a cash annuity (called pona) in lieu of their former tribute rental which the literature terms "blackmail." The Duffla agreements as described by Butler<sup>1</sup> are a good sample of the procedure.

In 1836-37, an agreement was entered into with the Dufflas to forego their extortions on receiving from the British Government a fixed sum in lieu of all demands.....In Char Dooar there are no less than one hundred and eighty Dufflah chiefs, belonging to twelve distinct clans, who receive 1,020 rupees per annum in

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1. Butler (1) 213/217. I quote this example at length because the Dufflas appear to have been organised on a very loose knit segmentary system similar to that of the Singpho. Note the tendency to simplify the scheme by assessing a cash value for each item. Similarly Butler, p.194,198. shows the British computing an obligation which included such things as ponies, musk pods, cowe tails, blankets, daggers, salt etc into a single lump sum of Rs 5,000.



lieu of the blackmail formerly extorted from the ryots. In the Now Dooar there are nine dooars (tracts of passes leading into the northern hills) occupied by 58 Dufflah Chiefs who receive compensation or a pension from Government of 1,523 rupees 9 ans. annually in lieu of blackmail, making a grand total for both Dooars of 2,543 rupees 9 as. 8 pice.....The contributions levied as blackmail were nearly all given in kind. On the arrival of the Dufflahs once a year, from their mountains in the Now Dooar, it was their custom to take from the Sahoreas Ryots (Government free pykes (or men)), from each house.

	As.	Pice
1 seer of salt valued at	4	-
5 seers of rice	1	-
Ready cash	1	-

If ready cash was not paid a Moonga, or Erea Gumcha or handkerchief valued at 3 As was taken instead. On their return to the hills, another cess or contribution, amounting to 7 rs. 10 As was levied from each village or community, fixed originally at twenty houses; and whether they had decreased or increased in numbers the Dufflahs neither reduced nor augmented their demand. The articles taken from each village consisted on this occasion of

	Rs	As
1 Erea cloth valued at	3	-
1 Moonga Gumcha handkerchief	-	4
1 Cow	2	8
Cash as a present	1	-
Rice, 1 bhar		4
1 Duck		2
1 seer of salt		4
1 seer of oil		4
	7	10

Besides the Sahorea, or free population, there were four villages (Baghmarra, Bihalle, Sakomata, Bakola) wholly inhabited by Cacharees, who were denominated Bohoteahs, or slaves; being free men bestowed originally by the Assam Kings for a particular service. This caste or tribe the Dufflahs especially considered as their slaves, from whom they claimed the right to collect two thirds of the produce of their labours. Each Bohoteah received from the British Government two poorahs of land and one rupee only was taken from him as revenue, or capitation tax; being two rupees less than was paid by the Government Pykes. The remission of two rupees granted in his favour was to enable him to meet the demands of the Dufflahs against him, in addition to the following amount of blackmail, viz



	Rs	As
1 Erea small cloth	1	
1 Moonga Cuncha		4
1 chaunam (or lime box)		8
1 kuttaree or knife		2
1 jappae hat or umbrella		4
1 bhar of rice		4
1 duck		2
1 seer of salt		4
1 seer of oil		4
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	3	

Butler then goes on to argue that the Dufflas have actually gained by the conversion of their traditional tribute into cash. One wonders however how long a cow continued to be valued at Rs 2-8! It seems legitimate to assume that the relationship was something very much along these lines. The curious assortment of items that go to make up the standard lists would be quite in the Kachin form and would be covered by the untranslatable Jinghpaw term hpasa.

The Abors were not so lucky as the Dufflas. The Government seem to have merely asserted the "freedom" of the Miris and then tried to impose segregation on the Abors by military force

"The Abors look upon the flat country at the foot of their hills as their territory and hunt fish and cut wood there freely. In the forties some of the natives in the plains earned a precarious living by washing ... for gold the Abors claimed a share of what they considered their gold and in 1848, not being satisfied, carried off ten of the gold washers."<sup>1</sup>

After a somewhat ineffective punitive expedition the British agreed to the payment of paga and for a while there was peace

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1. Babbage (1)



In 1862 after further trouble there was a large scale military operation involving the use of 300 sepoys 50 gunners and 2 twelve pounder howitzers;<sup>1</sup> but the net result was a new pos agreement for "iron, salt, opium, and other articles equivalent in value to three thousand rupees per annum." There was again peace until 1888 and then another punitive column. This time Government policy was reversed, instead of increasing the pos it was suspended and heavy fines imposed<sup>2</sup>, - (indeed as will become evident in the next Chapter, the "big stick" technique of Administration was much in vogue at this period). Needless to say the Abors caused more trouble rather than less. There have been further phases since then, paternalism, neglect, and then paternalism again but whether the pos system still survives I cannot say. However its existence throughout the last century is sufficient evidence of the principle I set out to demonstrate, namely that if the Administration insists on creating an artificial separation between Hills and Plains then one way or another it will find itself forced to subsidize the hills in order to prevent the inevitable outbreaks of violence that must result from economic stress.

Again the nature of the economic exchanges listed by Butler emphasise what I have stressed before namely the general noncoincidence in this area of cultural frontiers on the one hand and political economic frontiers on the other.

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1. Hamilton A. (1) 36.

2. Ibid 37/39  
Orleans (1) 352.



Hkamti Long.

Throughout this Chapter we have been considering situations in which the loosely <sup>linked</sup> knotted segments of the "Kachin" type of organisation move into the fringe of a plains territory and thereby acquire the opportunity to achieve greater political aggregation through the device of subjugating, or levying tribute from the existing inhabitants of the plains. In this we have presumed that the hill groups are politically dominant. In our theoretical discussion in Chapter V however it was pointed out that while it was possible for the hill groups to be dominant over the plains groups the norm must be expected to be the other way about. Usually it will be the plains groups that are dominant, and the hill people will have to work for the plains community as labourers or mercenary soldiers; it is only during periods of political instability in the plains, (such as is known to have existed throughout our area during the period 1750-1850), that the hill people are at all likely to achieve a political ascendancy.

The Hkamti Shan state in the putao Area, Hkamti Long as it is now known, or Bor Khampti as it was to the writers of the 1830s, had not escaped the disturbing effects of the gradual dissolution of the Maw Shan power during the 17th Century and its final elimination about 1799. But unlike the Myikawng and Assam it had not been subject to the ravages of full scale military campaigns. The decay already

apparent in 1828 was that of the branch of a tree whose roots have been severed; no one had made any direct assault on the branch itself. It is true that Wilcox in 1828 commented on the small proportion of the open plain under active cultivation remarks

"A great part of the plain is said to have been cultivated before the disturbances and dissensions introduced by the Burmans and there were many Khaphok villages in it"<sup>1</sup>

but there is no suggestion of a Burmese invasion. Barnard<sup>2</sup> on the other hand working on traditions collected from 1915 onwards reports two recent "invasions". The first of these is self contradictory. It is supposed to have been a punitive expedition from the paramount power at Mogaung and to have taken place during the reign of the Burmese King Bodawgyi (1781-1819) and that some years after this the Mogaung Sawbwa sent Sawbwa Sao Ma Ton of the Lokhkun clan to rule the territory. As the Mogaung State certainly ceased to exist in 1788 if not before, this story is not impressive, at any rate as to dates. Barnard's second invasion was supposed to have been a punitive expedition by the forces of the Burmese King Pagan Min (1846-53) brought about by the failure of the Hkanti to contribute a

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1. Wilcox (1) p.440.

According to the tradition given by Barnard 1, 138 there were once 16,000 Villages in the plain!

2. Barnard, op.cit.



large Tibetan dog which was one of the items of their annual tribute. This story also sounds rather fabulous.<sup>1</sup>

At any rate there was definitely no serious European intervention before 1910 and of European visits prior to that date we have full record, they were five in number Wilcox (1828), Woodthorpe and MacGregor (1884), Errol Gray (1893) all arrived from Assam, the first by way of the Hpungan Pass the others by the Chyaukan. Prince Henri D'Orleans (1895) arrived from Yunnan by way of Pangnamdin; E.C. Young (1905) arrived from Yunnan by way of the Kachin Triangle. Barnard (1910)<sup>2</sup> arrived from the south as the first official emissary of government and annexation followed in 1914 mainly as a counter stroke to suspected Chinese expansionist intentions,

When the British took over in 1914 there were no less than seven Shan chieftains claiming to be of the status of Sawbwa. Their "states" were in some cases very small as the following table shows<sup>3</sup>

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1. There were certainly early contacts with the Burmese. Khanti is shown correctly on the map recorded by Buchanan in Ava in 1796 (Buchanan 111) Wilcox (p.437) says that "a long period had elapsed since any Burman had visited the country" but (p443) "Chow Nan the son of the last ruling Khanti Prince had been twice to Amrapura- in the character of envoy or perhaps of hostage."
  2. For reports of these visits see Bibliography.
  3. Burma Gazetteer Vol B. No.31. Putao District.

Name of State.	Houses	Population		Total.
		Males	Females	
Putao	549	1443	1434	2878
Manse	229	556	650	1206
Lunkying(Lonkyein)	16	39	38	77
Mansekun	61	177	219	396
Mannu	53	152	192	344
Langtao	100	297	287	584
Langnu	133	289	339	628
(Mongyak)	45	98	109	207

The last named was added by the British after the annexation. Formerly it was part of Langtao.

The seven states fall into three groups Manse, Longkyein and Mansekun in the north formed the State visited by Wilcox in 1828 and recorded by him as Manchi. They held the exclusive rights to the Hpungan Pass route to Assam.<sup>1</sup>

Putao in the centre was formerly shown as Mung Khanti and in 1893 its ruler was the Lokkhun Sawbwa. Mannu appears to have been attached to Putao rather than the northern group.<sup>2</sup>

Langtao and Langnu in the south were formerly shown as Mung Lang and the several settlements in Assam of this name were probably colonized from this area. The Putao and Mung Lang people both used the Chyauken route to Assam.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Fritchard (i) 534.

2. At one time Putao was held by the northern group.

"He spoke of the system of warfare and mutual aggression without either side having gained material advantage over the other; he lamented it but saw no prospect of its termination. Our friends had but a few months before the arrival suffered the loss of the larger village Mung Khanti which had long been their capital and they informed us that they were now debating measures for surprising and recovering it in their turn (Wilcox (i) 435.)



Throughout the period during which there has been contact with the British these petty chieftains have been quarrelling among themselves. Tradition indeed relates that such quarrelling is endemic and that the Aitonias and Khamotis of Assam represent successive waves of emigrants from "Bor Khampti" who left their ancestral home as a result of defeat in one or other of the incessant local civil wars.

We have two alternative versions of the traditional history one collected by Macgregor and the other by Barnard and they are worth comparing in tabular form

Barnard's Version

1. Khamti originally ruled by a Tibetan Prince who had under him aboriginal inhabitants Hkamawng, Hkaman, Hkalan, Hkasan, Mawlit and Mato
2. Ahtun Hkamyang Shans from Hkaokao Mao Lon in the Shan States ruled over subject groups called Kang, Langhka, Nokkyo, Yoya, Tawhawng
3. Ahtun Sawbwa Sao Mang Nyi expelled by Mogaung Sawbwa Sao Sam Lon Wung and "Paklong" Mogaung
4. Mannu, Langdao and Lonkyein Sawbwes arrive from the south. Lonkyein intermarry with Mannu and quarrelling ensues. Civil War.

Macgregor's Version

(Not in Macgregor. Wilcox. p.442 "the country at the time of their arrival was inhabited by Lamas and the Khaphok tribe")

Aitonias Shans rule over subject tribes called Klaphole, Klalang, Mongmo, Singai, Singdi, Munghoe, Lunchot, Nokio, Lungkan, Lungphai, Pangsau, Noguun, Wankin, Mangot, Manhai, Manwei

Lungphang from Khenung (China) expelled the Aitonias who settled in Assam.

Mano a "son of the Raja of Mungkong (Mogaung) whose mother was a slave girl" defeats the Lungphang. Lungken "a Shan from Mungmao" defeated Mano.

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|--|--|
| 5. Hogaung Sawbwa sends punitive expedition against Lonkyein; installs Sawbwa Sao Ma Ton of Lekkun clan as ruler | "Lukun a Shan from Bhmo was brought over by Mudong and he defeated Lungken."                     |
| 6. Punitive raid by Burmans Lonkyein almost wiped out.   | Lukun and Lungken reigned alternately. At present (1884) the power of Lukun is in the ascendant. |

Several points which are relevant to my general thesis stands out from this account. Firstly there is the minor point that these two versions of the same tale collected in the same locality at an interval of about 30 years differ fairly substantially in detail; sufficiently to indicate a marked modification of tradition over the period.

Secondly there is the fact that though Mkamti Long is extremely isolated, economically self sufficient and far from over populated yet nothing approaching the conventional anthropological ideal of an integrated equilibrium society has emerged. On the contrary the whole picture is one of extreme instability.

Thirdly there is the astonishing number of locally domiciled "tribes" which the Mkamti Shans regard as alien to themselves. Indeed the lists given above are not complete by any means. Wilcox said that in the Mkamti plain itself the "mass of the labouring population is of the Khaphok tribe whose dialect is closely allied to the Singpho". He also mentioned Muluks (Mulluck) whom we have already encountered in Assam living as dependents of the Khampti; Khamung, "who inhabit



the mountaine to the north east and east" and who may safely be identified with the modern Kamung of Nung; Khalang, "whose villages on the Namlang" were subject to Manohi and whose language" more nearly resembles that of the Singpho than that of the Noguun tribe who are on the Nam Tisang.<sup>1</sup> And to this list Barnard further adds Noguung, M'Fit and Pangu.<sup>1</sup>

In the light of what was said in the previous Chapter these very numerous slightly differentiated "tribes" are of considerable interest as indicating the process of cultural transition. We can perhaps sort some of them out.

According to Barnard the Shan prefix "Hka-" is derogatory and means "slave",<sup>3</sup> thus Hka-nung means "slave Nung". The term lok hka - "slave class" - is applied generally to the non-Shan groups living among the Shans and in particular to the groups labelled Kang, Langkai, Nokkyo, Yoya, Tawhawng.<sup>4</sup> Barnard says of these particular groups

"(they were) up to the time of our occupation subordinate to the Shans, and had to render them service in the way of building houses and supplying the Sawbwas with fuel etc. Very little is known of these tribes and I have not been able to obtain even a small vocabulary of their language as they have been absorbed into the Shans whose language and dress they have completely adopted. The general opinion is that these tribes are of Tibetan origin.... With our occupation of Khamti the status of these tribes has improved and many try to pass themselves off as

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1. Wilcox. 442.

2. Barnard, i, 139.

3. Barnard, ii, Introduction, vii.

4. Barnard, i, 139.



Shans being ashamed of their low origin. The Shan does not intermarry with any of these Lok Hkas"<sup>1</sup>

At the present time (1943) the two groups are culturally entirely indistinguishable. The only difference is social. Those who claim to be "true Shans" give themselves the Sawbwas title Sao, with the result that rather more than half the males of M'kanti are "Princes"! Whether the ban on intermarriage remains effective I do not know, but I doubt it. We noted in an earlier chapter that Kang or Hkang which is the title by which Kachins generally know their Naga and Chin neighbours to the west, is applied by the Shans of the Sinpaw Area to the Kachins themselves.<sup>2</sup>

Wilcox's Khaphok also seem to be Kachins of some sort. Khaphok = Mka Hpok. But Hpok or Hpok Vaw is the term applied by the Maru to the Jinghpaw. Macgregor's Klaphole is probably the same word.

Khalang (Wilcox), Klalang (Macgregor), Hkalan (Barnard) also seem to be of a family. They live along the Nam Lang river subject to the Shans. Immediately across the Irrawaddy opposite the mouth of the Nam Lang are the Kachin people who call themselves Dureng or Duleng and who are famous as blacksmiths from Assam to Bhamo. <sup>Parker<sup>4</sup></sup> Paeko in Bhamo in 1895 heard of them as Gareng<sup>3</sup> and they link up with the Kareng tribe of Jinghpaw who were mentioned in Chapter 3. The village of

1. Ibid.

2. Kingdom Ward (1) Appx.1.

3. Enriques (11)18.

4. Paeko, ~~iii~~, 93. Parker, iii, 93

"As to the knives or da as the Burmese call them then P.T.O.



Nawngkai at the mouth of the Nam Lang today consists of three administratively separate villages - A Shan village under the Langtao Sawbwa, a Duleng Village, and a Christian Village. There is no doubt that it was formerly all subject to Langtao. One suspects that it represents Barnard's Langkai.

Nogmun (Wilcox and Macgregor), Nogaung (Barnard) do not actually live in the Khamti plain but in the paddy plain of the Nam Tisang further East. Nogaung in Shan means "outside the Mung"<sup>1</sup> i.e., outside the Khamti State proper. According to Barnard they have a tradition that they came from the Shan State of Wuntho, away to the south, west of Katha and at one time a dependency of Mogaung. They speak a dialect closely allied to Jinghpaw and call themselves Hsamhpyang or Hsampyen.<sup>2</sup> Bearing in mind the land tenure principle of resau sa mentioned in Chapter 3 it seems to me quite possible that some of their ancestors may have come from the south as Mogaung mercenaries and been allotted the land at Nogaung as a reward. Significantly Sam Hpyen in Jinghpaw means "Shan soldier". At the time of our occupation they appear to have been virtually Shans apart from their language. Government however has lately aided the establishment of a school at

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(Note 4 Continued from page 503) best we made by a tribe called Gareng. Other ironwork is done by the Neungsa tribe of Shan, often erroneously called Kakhyens" Neungsa- Maingtha to who reference has been made in earlier chapters.

1. Barnard, 1, 139.

2. Ibid also Barnard 11, Introduction.



Mogaung which is supplied with Jinghpaw textbooks, so no doubt they are about to become Kachins again.

Barnard's M'Tit claimed that they formerly "lived with the Dulengs at a place called Hkanka in the Nam Tamai valley and were known as Yapangs. Three generations ago they separated from the Dulengs and migrated to the Nam Tisang where they amalgamated with some people called Nip Tit, by which name they are now known....they shifted from there to the Hkamti plain when oppressed by the Kachins.....Most of them have now moved to Mogaung and Nati in the Myitkyina district.....their dialect closely resembles Chingpaw and they admit that they are the same tribe as the Duleng Chingpaw."<sup>1</sup>

There are no Duleng in the Nam Tamai Valley but the ~~Mirang like river is the centre of the Duleng country.~~

Yawpang are usually regarded as a commoner lineage of the Jinghpaw Maran clan and they appear under that name in the western Hukawng as adherents of the Tsasen;<sup>2</sup> they may be related to the Duleng lineage known as M'hpang.

Pangsu, says Barnard, were lok hka to the Lokhkun clan of the Hkamti. Their dialect "closely resembles Chingpaw." Formerly living in Mogaung with the M'Tit they moved to Hkamti to "seek protection under the Shans"....being "unable to resist the Kachins."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Barnard, 1, 139/140.
  2. Kawlu Ha Mawng (1) 47.
  3. Barnard, 1, 140.



Of the three groups Nongmung, N'Tit and Pangsu Bernard says

These three tribes or clans are gradually being absorbed by the Shans....All of them adopted the Shan dress and nearly all speak Shan in their houses. It is impossible for a stranger to distinguish them from Shans.<sup>1</sup>

These examples clearly demonstrate the fact of cultural transition. What is the social process involved? As before I argue that the primary motivation is economic. In the rigorous hill conditions of the Putao Area, the Shans of the paddy plain have an immense economic advantage over their hill neighbours. Provided they can maintain military and political superiority then inevitably the hill people must move in to work as labourers for the Shans

Bernard recognises the economic process but exaggerates the political motive

Many Nung families prior to the British occupation paid a yearly tribute in kind to certain Shan Sawbwas who protected them against the Lisu who harried them on the east. In fact the Nungs of the Mali and N'Mai valleys went between two bloodsuckers the Shan Sawbwas on the west and the Lisu on the east.<sup>2</sup>

Just why it should be any more "moral" for a British Administration to tax the Nung in return for protection than it was for the Shans to do precisely the same thing is not quite clear! But actually the term "tribute" distorts the issue. The dependence was of a more commercial kind.

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1. Ibid.

2. Bernard, 11, Introduction p.ix.



When a Nung decides not to pay to the Shans, it is because what he has been paying is not actually tribute but a repayment of advances made in kind to him years ago by certain Shans. The nung possesses very little property and naturally it takes years to pay back in kind say the price of a couple of buffaloes clothes etc advanced by the Shan. Many of the Nungs now no doubt think that they have repaid the Shan in full and so have decided to pay tribute to Government which they prefer to do as it is a regular and fixed yearly sum.... It might be mentioned that there are not many Nung families from whom the Sawbwas collect tribute. Mr. Terndrup reports that they are in a minority but that there are other Shans who make collections from the Nungs as already remarked,<sup>1</sup> not in the shape of tribute but as repayment of debts.

From this passage it is clear that the intervention of the British has provided an "escape clause" to a long term and virtually irredeemable mortgage. It may well be that such mortgages are in fact a normal feature in the cultural fusion process which we have noted above. In the taka system in the Chin hills described by Stevenson<sup>2</sup> a feature of the arrangement is that the creditor is temporally or permanently adopted into the lineage of his debtor. It is possible that in the Shan-Nung relationship it was the debtor who was adopted into the lineage of his creditor. As recorded in Chapter 3., informants have told me that the mayan in Jinghpaw society was permitted to make offerings to the junior household nats of his master and this would constitute in effect an adoption into the master's lineage. That the mayan relationship was often based on a debt contract such as described above

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1. RNEP 1919 p.6.

2. Stevenson (vi) 177.



has already been shown. It is reasonable to postulate a similar relationship as between debtor mungs and creditor Shans.

The picture that emerges therefore is that in the traditional past, as well as in the actual past of Wilcox's time, the Shans of "Bor Khampti" were politically dominant over all the hill groups in their immediate vicinity. By the close of the XIXth Century however this authority did not extend very far beyond the immediate borders of the open Futao plain. Errol Gray in 1893 had intended to penetrate beyond the Irrawaddy towards Yunnan by way of the modern Konglu. He was however frustrated in this by the supposed objections of an allegedly powerful Kshaku Chief "Alang Chow Tong". Alang Ga (Alang-dun-hku) is only some eight miles due east of Nawnghkai in Duleng country and the implication is that the influence of the Lungtao Sawbwa did not extend as far as this. Besides which we have other evidence that by the time the British came to take over in 1914 the authority of the Shans had already so weakened that even if the Mungs were still to some extent subject to them the situation was reversed in the case of the Duleng and Jinghpaw to the South East.

Thus in 1915 it is reported

"In the Mutao plain there are very few firearms among the Mungs living in the hills which surround the Hkamti plain..... nearly all the guns registered (among the Kachins)....are flint locks of a very serviceable kind....As the Kachins are in the habit of visiting Hkamti yearly at harvest time in order to live on the Shans who are afraid of them and they usually bring their guns with them Mr. Hertz has prohibited the carrying of firearms by hill tribesmen in the plains.<sup>1</sup>

### Summary.

In this Chapter I have tried to pull together the salient features of the available evidence concerning changes in political and religious organisation in the three areas, Assam-Burma Border, Mukuang Valley, and Hkamti Long. I have concentrated on those types of change which fall into the category which I have labelled "Inherent"; that is change which develops not from the direct intervention of the operations of a European paramount power, or of European traders and missionaries but from the normal flux and interaction of the indigenous elements in the society of the area treated as a whole. I am postponing consideration of "culture-contact" factors in the more usually accepted sense, i.e. administration, trade, missions, until a later Chapter. The material with which we have dealt here justifies this treatment. The evidence I have adduced has been based, it is true, upon the observation of Englishmen, and it

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1. R.N.E.F. 1915, p.11.



is evidence therefore drawn from a "culture-contact" situation. But for the most part these observations have been made at a time when the total direct European influence was extremely slight. Short of relying on pre-nineteenth century Burmese and Chinese sources, which are ruled out for the reasons explained at the beginning of this Chapter, this is the best we can do to demonstrate the nature of the change process in conditions unaffected by European contact. And after all it is not a bad best. Even in Butler's time<sup>1</sup> the total number of European Officials in the Muttuck/Sadiya area, (excluding that is tea-planters who began to arrive from 1840 onwards) was 3. The observations concerning the Mukaung are based upon (a) the journals of the first five Europeans to visit the area,<sup>2</sup> and (b) a Kachin official who himself lived in the valley for nearly 20 years, and who first visited it when, so far as I can judge less than a dozen Europeans had toured in the valley and none had stayed there for any length of time.<sup>3</sup> The comments on the Hkanti States

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1. Butler (1) 38.

2. Hannay (1835), Bayfield (1836), Norree (1890), Needham (1891) Griffith accompanied Bayfield but did not record much of value for our present purpose.

3. Kawlu Ma Nawng. He first saw the Mukaung in 1919.

in the Putao area are based on the reports of the first eight European expeditions to that area. Granted the evidence is often woefully thin, and on many exasperating points quite non-existent, it has the virtue that it is unprejudiced. The people who made these observations were telling a story for the first time, and they told it as well as they knew, they had no particular axe to grind; their various reports seem to me to "hang together" very well, - and that I take to be a measure of their honesty of observation.

In the next Chapter we will consider a similar though more restricted range of evidence as it relates to the Kachin Hills of Burma, but here we shall find the observation much less honest, for it is a tale told by missionaries who must needs find poor heathen souls to save from the devil, and hard pressed officials whose future depends upon their achieving a reputation for firmness and efficiency. Such men make much worse ethnographers than casual travellers who have no ultimate responsibility for the truth or untruth of what they have to say.

Finally I would add a methodological note on the use



I have made in this Chapter of Shan and Kachin "traditional histories" as reported by Kawlu Ma Nawng, Buchanan, Barnard and others. In no case have I treated tradition as a factual account of an actual sequence of events. What I have done is to interpret contemporary accounts of events in the light of traditions relating to those events. Traditions, I hold, take the form they do because of the structural relations existing between groups in the community in which they are told. In a sense they serve to "explain" and hence perpetuate those relationships. From this point of view the analysis of social structure becomes a problem of demonstrating the nature of the relationship between current tradition and historical fact.

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## Chapter VII

### Evidence of Cultural Flux(11) North

#### Burma

#### Resume of the Theoretical Argument.

As explained at the beginning of Chapter VI British contact with the Kachins of North Burma on any substantial scale did not begin for nearly 40 years after the contacts with the Singphos in Assam, and by this late date (1863), "culture contact" with the West had already had considerable indirect effects. For this reason the North Burma material though in many ways more detailed than that from Assam is not always quite so appropriate for our purposes. Let us review again for a moment what those purposes are.

I have advanced the hypothesis that a rice economy is basic to the Kachin Social Structure. This is not an argument in favour of the geographical determinism of culture, but rather a statement of the situation as found. Within the Kachin Hills Area as defined, the basic rice economy takes on several forms, dry rice, wet rice on terraces, wet rice on paddy plains, small widely scattered hill communities, large tightly aggregated hill communities, moderately sized and moderately spaced plains communities.



In the course of previous Chapters I have developed the theme that these differences are best understood as variations of emphasis and that the differences of economic and demographic organisation correlate closely with corresponding differences in the scale and aggregation of the political organisation.

Viewed in this way the total society despite all its cultural, economic and political variations represents a continuum and no part of that continuum can be properly understood in isolation from the total context. In particular the isolated criterion of language in no sense defines a group which can be intelligibly analysed in sociological terms; this is evidenced by the fact that under pre-British conditions it was most unusual for linguistic and political boundaries to coincide.

In a field such as that of Burma-Assam, language is a criterion of minor differentiation within the organisational whole; the groupings that can be identified by means of language alone correspond to the classes of Western society, or more closely still to the castes of Hindu India. It is true that some ethnographers in the Indian field have attempted to study single castes in isolation from their economic neighbours but sociologically this is not a very useful procedure.

In practice, in the Burma field, the isolated criterion of language has been selected as critical and language groups have been loosely labelled "races". In a scientific sense this misuse of terms may be unimportant but it has had important political repercussions, since administrators have come to think that cultural boundaries, as defined by language, represent natural political boundaries. Administrative action has thus led to an artificial segregation of hill peoples from plains people.

We have seen that the terms Kachin and Shan, after rather devious histories, have in the course of time settled down to possessing precisely this distinction. The peoples of the hills are Kachins, the peoples of the plains are Shans.

I have devoted considerable space to pointing out some of the inconsistencies of this position. I have shown that the people of the hills are very far from being culturally uniform; this correlates with the fact that in the hills the basic rice economy has been adapted to a variety of different political and geographical circumstances. On the other hand the people of the plains show a considerable degree of superficial cultural uniformity - implying perhaps that the wet rice economy of the plains permits relatively little thematic variation



in the general social organization that surrounds it. Yet to draw a simple dichotomy between plains culture on the one hand and hill culture on the other ignores some of the most important elements in the total situation; in particular there is the fact that large parts of the hills are economically dependent upon the adjacent tracts of plain and that on this account there exists a "natural" intimate connection - both political and economic - between the inhabitants of such areas.

In the last Chapter we examined in some detail the situation existing in three such "plains-hills" fringe areas at the time of the first British intervention. In Singpho Assam, in the Mokokchung Valley and in Khamti Long alike the evidence all pointed to the same conclusion, namely that prior to the imposition of a segregation policy by the British, there was no clear cut cultural distinction to be drawn between Kachins on the one hand, and Shans on the other. The two groups were definable among themselves in terms of kinship and in terms of general cultural behaviour, but the division thus provided was not hard and fast. The Shan kinship system and the Kachin kinship system overlapped at many points. Kachins who became politically subordinate to Shans tended to be accepted into the Shan kinship system; Shans and "Assamese" who

became politically subordinate to Kachins likewise become coopted into the Kachin kinship system. The "flow" was not all in one direction- Shans might become Kachins, Kachins might become Shans according to political and economic circumstance.

I now want to drive the argument home by citing one or two well documented instances of similar flux conditions from the North Burma area.

#### Nature of the North Burma Data

The essence of modern anthropological analysis is in its small scale detail. Despite the remoteness in time, the data on the Singphos considered in the last Chapter is to some extent admissible as anthropological because of, this small scale. The data on the Kachins of North Burma, though more recent in time, is often inadmissible because it is too large in scale. There are in existence a considerable number of ethnographic accounts of "the Kachins" (1) dating from 1847 onwards, but this whole body of material is useless for our present purpose. All these accounts assume as a start that there is a standard type of "Kachin" behaviour which is different from "Shan" or "Burmese" behaviour; they thus provide no data for the examination of

1. See bibliography.

Hannay, Anderson, Steven, George, Wehrli, Hertz, Hansen, Gilhodes, Garraiett, Scott.



this proposition. Moreover the accounts are synthetic. The Singphos of the early Assam literature were a small group, not more than 6,000 in number, and mostly of close kin; the Kachins of the later literature are a vague group of some 300,000 persons scattered over the whole of North Burma.

Nevertheless, even if we ignore the ethnographic accounts that deal specifically with Kachins as such we have in the early reports of official travellers, early missionaries, and others, ample material to demonstrate the very close economic and political relationships existing between "Kachins" and "Shans" under the Burmese regime. The material is indeed far too ample to be fully recorded in this Chapter and I propose to confine myself to a few selected examples.

(1)

I shall draw upon the following sources.

Hannay (1835) and Bayfield (1836) both travelled the same route between Ava and Mogoke. They travelled by river and reported in some detail upon all they saw en route. Bayfield in addition gained access to Burmese official documents, which explained the official view of the political structure of Shan State.

1. See bibliography under names quoted.

From this date few Europeans visited North Burma  
(2)  
until 1863. Clement Williams, an official of the British  
residency at Mandalay, then reached Bhamo, hoping to  
penetrate to Tengyueh. Actually he got no further than  
Sikaw, close to the modern Kyothit at the foot of the  
Sinalun Kachin Hills, which was then the point at which  
cargoes for China were transferred from boat to mule-pack  
transport. His journal gives some valuable data on the  
group of villages round Sikaw. Fortunately this same group  
of villages are mentioned in the Burmese documents quoted  
earlier by Hayfield.

In 1886 an official British expedition under Bladen  
succeeded in reaching Tengyueh from Bhamo. The events  
connected with this expedition are very fully reported in  
half a dozen official reports of one sort or another.

As a result of this expedition the British succeeded  
in establishing at Bhamo an Assistant British Resident.  
Thereafter European contacts with the area increased very  
rapidly. By 1894 there were three different Christian  
missions assaulting the Kachins from a Bhamo base - Roman  
Catholic, American Baptist, and the China Inland Mission.

A European firm - Messrs Sutherland and Co - established

1. Bishop Bigandet, R.C. Bishop of Mandalay visited Bhamo  
about 1888 but I cannot ascertain the exact date.  
Anderson, I, Preface iv.



a European Agent in Shamo at this date, with other Indian and Burmese Brokers farther North, and so on. In this year too the British Government in South Burma, sent one of its Forest Officers, - Mr Strettell, - to the north to investigate the newly developed trade in India rubber latex. Strettell visited the Sikkim area near Shamo and also Myithyine, Mogoke, Kanning and the Indawgyi lake. His Journal is extremely detailed and a very valuable source.

From this date on documentary sources of various kinds become very numerous, but, for our purposes, tend to decline in quality because the influence of the Europeans upon the nature of the data becomes increasingly significant, for it must be understood that, although the annexation of Upper Burma did not take place until 1885, the whole Burmese political structure was in an extremely precarious state at least from 1875 onwards. In effect the full force of Western Culture contact was already being experienced; the evidential data is confused in consequence.

From 1880 onwards there are a number of official exploration reports which are of some value, but the fact that their authors were all engaged upon punitive expeditions of one sort or another indicates the type of prejudice that is to be expected. I cannot find any account later

(1)

than 1878 in which a European was travelling in the Kachin Hills without the full backing of British military force.

For this reason the views expressed in such works as the Census Report of 1891 and the Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States <sup>(2)</sup> cannot always be accepted as authoritative. The latter work in point of fact provides a mass of evidence to support my general contention of cultural flux between hills and plains, but it does so despite the intentions of its authors who held firmly to the view that the Kachins were a bunch of nefarious brigands who could only be kept in order by the massive display of military force.

### The Bhuno-Tengyueh trade route.

I propose now to narrow down my field of observation to a very small section of the total Kachin field; namely that effected by the Bhuno-Tengyueh trade route.

This certainly does not represent a typical sample of the total Kachin field, because it was economically of exceptional importance. For that very reason however, it is exceptionally well documented. Furthermore I shall later quote evidence to show that the conditions that can be analysed in detail for this small area existed in general form in many other parts of the Kachin Hills. The



situation in this particular area may have been exceptional in some respects in degree, but not in kind.

Let us consider why this area was of exceptional importance.

Owing to the geographical nature of the terrain trade routes between Yunnan and Burma have been sharply canalised since remote antiquity.

The most northerly route of any importance leads through Hpimaw- Htawgaw to meet the Irrawaddy at Waingmaw close to the modern Myitkyina.

Another route starting from Tengyueh goes via Kuyung - Kambaiti Pass - Saden and also fetches up at Waingmaw.

The next again starts from Tengyueh and goes via Tsante (Banda) - Sime Pa - Pajau - Telaw (on the Irrawaddy).

A feature of all these three routes is that they reach the Irrawaddy north of the Upper Defile. For this reason they are not satisfactory routes for contact with central or lower Burma, though they sufficed for contact with the Mogaung area.

Proceeding south again the next route is "the most obvious" in a geographical sense. Tengyueh - Taping Valley - Rhemo. A variant of this goes Tengyueh - Motha - Latha -  
(1)  
Simlun Hills - Rhemo.

1. Alternately Tengyueh - Mongwan - Simlun Hills - Rhemo.

A route which looks better on the map than it is in practice is Lungling - Mong Mao and down the valley of the Shweli. Actually the Shweli forms an impractical gorge for part of its course and this route actually deviates into a purely overland route Lungling - Hsenwi - <sup>a</sup>Mandalay, i.e. the course of the modern "Burma Road". An alternative variation swings more or less due west from Mong Mao <sup>and</sup> crosses the Kachin Hills by what is now the Mawlaikhan-Shamo Highroad. This route formerly reached the Irrawaddy at Sewadi south of Shamo.

With the exception of the overland route through Hsenwi all these routes fetch up at the Irrawaddy which formed the main artery of commerce from North to South. Even the jade cargoes from the Kamsing area travelled by river as far as Telaw, normally by way of the Mogaung River though for a period by the extremely devious route Uyu Chaung, Chindwin, Ava, Irrawaddy, Shamo, Telaw. From the economic point of view water transport has an immense advantage over any form of overland pack transport, so that the normal line of trade from Paoshan and Tengyueh in China was westward to the Irrawaddy and then south rather than by the straight line overland route.

The depot ports on the Irrawaddy varied over the course of history owing to changes in the nature of the trade and



also owing to changes in the course of the principal rivers. Thus for example on the Irrawaddy north of the Upper Delta, Talaung, Hpaung, Akya, Katya, Waingunaw and Waingun all seem to have been at different times leading depots on the trade route between China and Mogaung. (1) Likewise in the Rhane area the points shown on the modern maps as Kaungton, Sewadi, Kampanage, Sihaw (Taping), and Myothit have all at different times been relatively important points of cargo transshipment. Modern Rhane indeed is known to the Chinese merely as Hsin Lai - "New Market".

There is fairly solid evidence for the view that certainly from the beginning of the 17th Century onwards the great bulk of the trade between Burma proper and China was canalized through routes terminating, at the Burma end, near Rhane. The major Burmese export was cotton. Imports were of very mixed variety. Crawford estimated the total value of the Rhane trade at the beginning of the 19th Century at about £700,000 per annum. (2)

When first observed by Europeans, - i.e. 1826, the normal procedure was for cargoes to be brought by large river boats as far as Rhane. They were then transhipped

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1. It seems to me improbable that three or four large Rhane cities existed simultaneously in this area as is sometimes suggested.
  2. Pemberton (1), 136; Crawford (1) of the figure for 1821 £122,750,000 (say £1,600,000) Barrow (1) 195, owing to the Burma Road development the Rhane trunk traffic is now negligible. Trade was estimated at £25,000 in 1885.

into small shallow draught boats which took the cargoes to the limit of navigability on the Taping - a point which seems to have varied from time to time between Sikaw and Myethit. Cargoes were then transferred to mule transport and taken into China by one of two routes. The first crossed the hills by a route to the north of the Taping River through Fungling (Fonling), reaching up finally at Manyung (Manung) and thence directly up the Taping Valley to Tengyueh. The second known in the literature as the "Ambassadors Route" passed through the Northern Sauri tract by way of Mahtang Lollung (Mahtang), Hong Wan, and thence to Tengyueh or Lungling.

There was also a third route further to the south which left the Irrawaddy south of Shamo at Sawadi and crossed the hills approximately at latitude 24 N.

The question of the political control of these routes was clearly a matter of great economic importance to the groups concerned. In accordance with a well recognised procedure the Kachin chiefs levied various forms of toll upon all cargoes passing through their territory. These charges were generally recognised as legitimate by the superior governments concerned. In return, the Kachin chiefs were expected to guarantee safe passage and keep the roads in good order.

This control was not restricted to the "savage tribes".



Every political boss great or small expected to take his "squeeze" off trade in transit through his territory.

Under the name of likin the system was still widely current in China as late as 1935. The petrol system in France is in principle very similar.

The British imbued with the doctrine of Free Trade invariably suppressed tolls of this kind at the first opportunity without regard for the economic consequences.

The toll-payers naturally took advantage of this British prejudice.

When the British consolidated their position in the Shensi area in 1890 the local Shensi and Burmans insisted that the Kachins were mere brigands and recent arrivals at that, having no rights either to land or taxes. This view, which was generally accepted at the time, simply does not accord with the available evidence.

To demonstrate this let us consider the records relating to the group of plains villages around the point on the Taping River where cargoes were finally transhipped from boat to mule pack.

#### Man Naung Circle.

The villages in question, in the area Sikaw, Mintha, Myokit, Siket, were in pre-British days a part of the "circle", Mye, or Mong of Man Naung. This is what Scott and Hardiman

wrote of Nan Naung in 181.

"From the founding of Nan Naung, 200 years ago, down to the annexation an hereditary line of pawnglars controlled the village and circle which included all the villages between Ma-ubin and Tamenkhou as well as those now on the western bank of the Nan Naung Clearing. The village was attacked by Nga Naung with a hundred Burmans and 3,000 Kachins in New Naings rising of 1803 and all its inhabitants were driven out. The Kachins then established a post here and attacked Sikan, Melon (Muelon) and Theinthan; but after an occupation of 20 days they were driven out by the Shwelan Wan who came up with a body of Burmans from Shamo.

In 1808 5 Chinese households removed from Sikan to Nan Naung when the former place was burnt by the Lakun Sere Kachins. The northern elbow of land between the Nan Naung and Taping rivers is now occupied by a few households of Kachins. "(1)

"New Naings rebellion" to which reference is here made may be regarded as a general symbol of the chaotic conditions that prevailed during the final period of collapse of the Burmese Kingdom.

"Details of the forays made by New Naing and his Kachins are unreliable; only the general conclusion can be trusted that there were few villages in the square of country between Idawgyi, the Le Mye (Myithyia) Shamo and Mese that escaped devastation. Hordes of Kachins from all the Kachin Hills joined him in the hope of plunder ... New Naing claimed descent and name from a legendary New Prince who once held sway in the country to the east of the Idawgyi lake whither he had fled from the Burmese." (2)

1. Scott (vi) II, II, 195

2. Ibid II, II, p. 371. Naungnaing is the same word differently romanized as the "Nau-naing Shamo" the former ruling Shan lineage in the Nau-naing to which reference has already been made. Note again the political alliance of Shan and Kachin.



It will be seen that this tale of desolation immediately preceding the establishment of Pax Britannica closely parallels the situation reported from Assam in 1836. The Burma situation likewise has certainly been grossly exaggerated. The Haw Saing of 1883 however was an historical character and he derived much of his backing from the Chinese. It needs always to be remembered that the Chinese regarded the Shan states of Bhamo Mhayin (Bong Yang) and Hogaung (which were annexed by the Burmese in the latter part of the 18th Century) as being Chinese provinces. (1) They have not renounced their claim even today.

But to get back to Man Neung - all Scott and Hardiman's account tells us is that Kachins attempted to seize the Man Neung Circle about 1883 and that Lokum Sare Kachins were later mixed up in a similar action.

I will discuss the identity of the "Lokum Sare" Kachins presently, but for the moment let us turn to Mayfield's report dated 1836.

Mayfield's data which are based on Burmese records show that at that date the Burmese provincial governor of Bhamo (myo wun) administered a district which comprised the whole of the plains area to the east of the Irrawaddy

from the boundaries of Hmeh State northwards. Bayfield lists in all 161 villages all of which appear to lie in the plain. They are subdivided as follows among fourteen sub-districts (mye or mong) thus

<u>District Name</u>	<u>Villages</u>	<u>District Name</u>	<u>Villages.</u>
Bhamo	12	Maimwee (Maignaw)	6.
Maimka (Mong Kha)	6	Maimway (l.e. Mong	
Man Nong	9	Wei-We-cyi)	5
Kwonlon	7	Mole (Mong Lai)	6
Tainhien	7	Kanlon (Malong)	9
Kakhio (Kathyo)	12	Homaek	11
Wainssau (Waignaw)	6	Maimkhat (Mong Khat)	4
		Nga	38.

Maimka is ambiguous since there are several possible  
(1) Mong Kha. Kwonlon, Nga and Tainhien I cannot identify, but the rest are clear enough. Now of these Maimka, Man Nong, Kwonlon and Tainhien are specifically stated to be under Kakhien chiefs.

The nine villages comprising the sub-district of Man Nong are listed as follows

#### Bayfield's Spelling

Nyaung-Bong  
Tainthau  
Kantha  
Teeenka  
Teeenaga  
Tehwat Man  
Tahain Ling  
Halon  
Man Nong

#### Modern Spelling

Nyaungbindat  
Tainthaw  
Kantha, Ingthon (Williams)  
Sikaw, Taitga (Anderson)  
Leit gna (Anderson)  
  
Saingkin  
Kelon, Kuelon, Kailone (Spltnir)  
Man Nong, Manlung (Anderson)

1. The northern Gauri tract in the Siam Kachin Hills was known as Mong Kha and it is tempting to suppose that the various Mong Kha in the Bhamo plain were dependences of the Gauri chiefs.



It is clear that this sub-district ruled over by a Kachin chief in 1836 is the same as the Man Hsing circle mentioned by Scott and Hardiman in 1901 though it includes rather more than the latter. Very significantly it includes Twelon, Tsingthaw and Seinghin the three localities which the Kachins are reported to have attempted to recapture in 1863. The evidence seems strong that this circle or mong, though possessing its hereditary Shan ruler (paw-mong), was nevertheless a Kachin dependency so that the Shan paw-mong had the status of vassal with respect to the Kachin chief concerned.

If this was the case then the raids reported by Scott and Hardiman as mere acts of brigandage were from the Kachin point of view attempts to reassert traditionally sanctioned political rights.

It may I think be legitimately inferred that the Kachin households living at or near Man Hsing in 1901 had formerly been the representatives of the "protecting" Kachin chiefs. Scott himself notes that it was the normal procedure for a Kachin chief to post representatives in the Shan villages (1) which he protected.

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1. Scott (VI) II, III, 167...cf also Walker (1) 166.  
The village of Kwita (N.W. of Myithyine) is a Shan Chinese village of 78 houses protected by the Sabwa of Bagaung Hills and contains four households of protecting Kachins ....

We cannot be absolutely certain which Kachin chiefs were involved, for the evidence concerning the extent of the different Kachin mung in the Siam hills prior to the arrival of the British is confused. There was considerable disintegration of the Kachin political structure in the interregnum period 1883-1890, and the writers of the 1890 period were confused by several factors. They did not appreciate that every aristocratic village headman was likely to call himself chief (duwa) whether or not he had the full status of mung duwa - or "thigh eating chief"

1. (mayi sha ai du) ; they assumed that all the adherents of a chief must necessarily be of the same "tribe" or "clan" as the chief himself; (2) they were confused by the dialectical variations of the clan names themselves - for example two lineages of the Lahtaw clan now written as Lawthum and Lawthum were confused with the main M'Kham clan which appears in the literature as Lakum, Lakone, Lakum etc. (3)

1. See Chapter 3.

2. The original intention was to administer the Kachins separately "according to their clans". The R.M.S.F. 1893 Appx. This of course was impossible but the attempt to do so was partly responsible for breaking up the existing mung structure in which the paramount chief might be of one clan while his subordinate headmen, who styled themselves duwa, were of another.

3. Henson (1) Englewood (11) 27, both say that Lakum is a subgroup of Lahtaw. I think this is incorrect.



In 1868 and 1878 the three chiefs who were constantly in evidence at and around Sikkim were "Seray", "Penese", and "Penline", (1) "Seray" apparently being the senior. Seray's village is shown on modern maps as Shere. Shere is a major lineage in the main N'Ham clan. Scott's Lohm-Sere Kachins can therefore be interpreted as the Shere-N'Ham, who probably controlled the whole of the route between Sikkim and Mangung on the north bank of the Taping, though the Aisi chiefs at Wangun were also influential in the area.

What precisely was the economic status of the "protected" plains villages with respect to their hill overlords? It appears that they fulfilled two more or less separate functions. Firstly they were trading centres for the Kachins, exchanging salt and rice for cotton, ~~seacorns~~ and other hill products. All accounts from 1855 onwards stress the extreme dependence of the Kachins of the Sinpaw area upon Burmese salt so that on the face of it the Burmese authorities might have exerted political pressure by withholding salt supplies. From time to time the Burmese seem to have made it as difficult as possible for the Kachins themselves to trade direct with Shans but this

(2-

1. Anderson (i) & (ii); Slater (i) & (ii)  
 Penline = Penlyne = Penolein = Puhling.  
 Penese = Penesee = (not on modern maps)  
 Seray = Serey = Sere = Shere.  
 2. Anderson (iv) 46.

was obviated by having tame markets at the foot of the hills. In addition to this straight forward trade process the Kachins usually levied a rice tax on the plains villages which they "protected". In very few of the lists of items of goods traded between the hills and plains is there any mention of rice; a possible explanation of this is that rice was regarded as a due rather than a trade good. (1)

Some dated quotation will be of interest.

(2)

(1) Scott and Hordiman (1901) on Mintha

"Consisted of two villages "upper" and "lower" Mintha 19 and 20 houses respectively.

"The villagers have no plough cattle and hire those they need from Maung at thirty baskets of paddy the season. They work yeaya 10(3) and also trade with the Kachins. Salt is bought at Rs 12½ per 25 viss in Shamo and sold at Rs 16; sesamum is bought at Rs 2 per basket and sold in Shamo at Rs 2 12 As.

(4)

(11) Some sources as Sikaw (53 Houses in 1901)

"The villagers own 17 buffaloes and work mayin(5) paddy. It is said the Chinese lived here from 1648

1. British travellers usually observed the situation in December - March. At this period of the year Kachins are flush with rice. In November owing to earlier cropping they may even sell rice to the plainmen. Wet season buying of rice by the Kachins may always have been more extensive than the records suggest.

2. Scott (vi) II, I, p.122.

3. Ordinary wet paddy.

4. Scott (vi) II, III, p.167.

5. Wet season wet paddy. An area between Li Kaw and Maung Maung which is a lake in the rains dwindles to a marsh in the hot weather and is used for mayin on this area.

Cultivation.



to 1863 in which year the floods came up the valley and forced them to move to Myothit; there they were attacked by Lachins and so they retired to Monnong.

(iii) Same sources as Sihet (64 Houses in 1961) (1)

"The villagers own 64 buffaloes and work mayin and koukayl(2); there is a large area of cultivable land in the neighbourhood".

Scott and Hardiman's dates are unreliable. In 1868 at the time of the Bladen expedition Sihaw was still the main loading point with its accompanying colony of Chinese and there is no mention of Myothit. The same is true of Strettell's trip in 1874. The latter describes Tsoekaw (Sikaw) as a village of 160 houses with a population of Shan Burmese and Shan Tayok well stockaded.

"Within a separate enclosure but only a few yards distant the Chinese have established a small community of their own and erected cotton godowns and a shenshee distillery; they also carry on an extensive business in salt which is bartered for other articles". (3)

Mon Hnung which in 1961 was a village of only 9 houses though seemingly still wealthy and influential, in 1868 contained "about 60 houses"

"the women at this time were all busily engaged upon weaving cloth from cotton procured from the Lakhayens, who grow it in the hills. The village boasted of a large and flourishing monastery, far superior to any to be seen in Bhamo.(4)

1. Scott (vi) II, 21, 1868.

2. Main crop wet paddy.

3. Strettell (1) 102.

4. Anderson (ii) 63. (Monnong = Mon Hnung)

Sladen's report makes it clear that in 1858 it was still the Kachins rather than the Burmese who exercised effective control in the Han Hong area.

"The route via Ponlyne (Pungling) to Hanyang (Monyang) was virtually in the hands of these three Sawbwas, Ponlyne, Kensee and Doray (Shaw). They had all contributed miles and men for the expedition ... It is true that the Taping Chang-oh and a few tanons (Hta-mong) or heads of villages on the banks of that river were still present (at Sikaw); but the villagers referred to are a hybrid race, known as Shan Burmese, who pays taxes but receive no protection from the local Government at Bhamo. Their headmen therefore find it necessary to come to a local understanding with the Kachyen chiefs who occupy the adjacent hills to be mutually forbearing to each other .... The villagers thus become subservient rather to the Kachyen chiefs than to their more lawful masters at Bhamo. (1)

The Kachin Chiefs themselves seem in a number of cases to have held official status both in the Chinese-Shan hierarchy and in the Burmese political structure. Thus Sladen and Anderson show that the Shan chiefs of Mantang and Lailung were probably rather more under the influence of the Sawbwa of Lasa (Latha) than that of the mye wan of Bhamo. (2) Anderson's description of the first appearance of the chief of Ponline (Pungling) is symbolic of this ambivalent status.

1. Sladen (1) 28.

2. Anderson (11) 222; Sladen (1) 111.



"The Kokhyen chief of Ponline ... visited us attired as a mandarin of the blue button and attended by six or eight followers. He carried a gold umbrella, which he had received from the King of Burma with the title napada paan or mountain king ...." (1)

Undoubtedly the border chiefs exploited their frontier borderline position to the full, adhering first to one side and then to the other according to the changing developments of large scale politics; but the writers of the 1890 period who present the picture as one of complete lawlessness are certainly misleading. At most relevant periods the Burmese were anxious to impress upon the British the immense difficulties to be encountered in making any passage of the Kachin Hills, and they therefore tried to impress British official travellers with the view that they exercised no control over the Kachin chiefs whatsoever, but this clearly was not the case.

Williams in 1863 records his report in journal form. On p.116 he notes that the Rhamsa wan complains that the "Kokhyens do not obey him", but a few pages later it appears that the "Tsauboes of Bedwin and Ponsee" (2) have been called in and interviewed by the wan. Later it appears that these and other Kachin chiefs have applied

1. Anderson (11) 87.
2. Williams (1) 125.

for permission to visit Mandalay and put up certain propositions to higher authority; on p. 149 we have "today the royal order arrived giving permission for the Kakhyaen Toubwas to proceed to Mandalay". All this is hardly the procedure of lawless bandits!

In point of fact visits by Kachin chiefs to Mandalay were probably not infrequent. The Burmese Court treated them just as any other minor Shan or Burmese chiefs. Anderson met two such travellers in 1875.

"The same steamer brought up from Mandalay two Kakhyaen chiefs of the central route, viz Munggha (Mong Hka) and Poonhya (Bumwa). In return for services rendered to the recent Burmese embassy, these two chiefs had been received with high honour, and presented with gold umbrellas and gilded saddles. They rode through Bhamo on ponies decorated with the gilded equipage, while each rider wore a golden head-band bearing his titles, preceded by a man carrying the gold umbrella, and escorted by others beating gongs and proclaiming his rank." (1)

The strongly propagandist contents of the information supplied through Burmese sources is clearly indicated by the following remarks by Williams concerning the villages we have been discussing. In the normal way the devolution and fission of a single village into a village cluster might be supposed to correlate with both a growth in population and an increase in local security, but Williams was told

"Ingtha (Hinthath) was formerly a single village but the depredations of their wild neighbours and, as the inhabitants expressed it, the heat of the



Government have caused desertion and decay till the one has split into three Ingtha, Siko (Sikow), Ingtha (Kinttha et al). The inhabitants are Shans many of them of mixed blood with the Burmans. They speak of good old times when the Kachyens were unknown in their neighbourhood and when the whole country was cultivated and they lived happily under their own rulers .... (1)

The golden age is ever far away. The Shans Shan Sawba capitulated to Alaungpaya about 1751.

At this time (1863) the Kan Naung group of villages seem to have been in the uncomfortable position of having to pay taxes both to Burmese and Kachin overlords. The villages closer to the hills were in a better position.

The village of These (Sihet) six miles N.N.W. of Ingtha contributes more frequent blackmail than those near the river ... On account of the expenses incurred in satisfying these savages, These is very considerably exempted from some of the Government taxation. (2)

Williams further confirms the fact of close economic relations between hills and plains. Thus of Sikow

close by the still room there were stores of salt this being at present one of the chief articles of trade with the Kachyens who come down for it and bring in exchange silver and occasionally cotton. (3)

The headman of Ingtha (Kinttha) appears to have had a feud with some neighbouring Kachin chief on account of the

1. Ibid p. 108
2. Ibid p. 106.
3. Ibid p. 106.

fact that four Kachins, including a brother of the said chief, had been killed in a brawl in his village. This (1) resulted in heavy stockading of the village in fear of attack but did not effect continued economic relations.

Of Intha itself Willies comments:-

"Notwithstanding these unpleasant relations (i.e. the feud), these villagers trust the Kachyons with the price of salt and other commodities and tell me they rarely fail to fulfil their engagements .... The majority of the inhabitants of these villages are simple cultivators of paddy, only a few of them dealing in cotton, salt, and other merchandise. Some of them who are deemed rich, lend paddy to the less fortunate at a percentage until the return of harvest; others act as pawnbrokers both to their neighbours and to the Kachyons. The Thogyee of Myokoung (i.e. the headman) showed me a number of his pledges from the latter consisting of markets gongs, necklaces etc. etc. (2)

It will be noted that the items pledged are standard Kachin hpaga, the formal "items of exchange" which enter into all forms of ritually based obligation, whether the debt (hka) relates to a marriage, a legal dispute or a plain economic contract.

Strettell's account 1874 indicates that the general position had not altered materially in the interval. Sihat was described as "a large village".

1. Ibid p. 108

2. Ibid p. 109



"The village was strongly barricaded but I was told that the safety of the people mainly consisted in keeping on good terms with the mountaineers, and meeting their demands as far as possible; this entails extra expense, and the inhabitants are exempted from all taxation by the Burmese Government." (1)

Since Strettell particularly comments of this place that (2)  
the "people seem exceedingly happy and contented", the brutal oppressions of the Kachins do not seem to have borne very heavily!

Indeed if my analysis is correct, it is perfectly obvious that the Kachin chiefs would not intentionally make life intolerable for their Shan adherents. There was no shortage of land and any Shan community that found life too uncomfortable could move away. On the contrary the Kachins took positive steps to encourage Shan settlement within their area of protected plains land. Strettell writes as follows of an unnamed village of 11 houses on the Taiping, - possibly Malula:

"This little community has been planted under the auspices of the Kakhyans to the east, with a guarantee of protection, on the understanding that immediately the people had fairly established themselves each house was to pay a yearly fixed tax in the shape of grain, vegetables or any other article stipulated for. The people seemed quite content with this arrangement, and had taken no precaution of protecting themselves from the surrounding mountaineers(3)

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1. Strettell (1) 149 Seikhet - Sihat.
  2. Ibid p. 110.
  3. Ibid p. 99.

### Comparative Data.

A positive colonisation policy of this kind was quite characteristic. There is plenty of supporting evidence. For example when the Fungikun-Manukun triangle (1) area was first taken over in 1899 the headmen of eight Shan villages called on the British Civil officer

and represented that the Kachin Chiefs of Monka, Fonglin, Nasse, Yangwa and Sanka had for years past taken blackmail from them in the shape of one basket of paddy per house. Later in the season.... Mr Rae went into the matter and found that the Monka duwa has a reasonable claim on the villages of Manhwo, Monmawn and Monpaung inasmuch as these villages were started by and until recently owed their existence to him. (2)

(3)

Elliott's account of conditions in the Myithyina area east of the Irrawaddy in 1890 confirms in every way the conclusions of my data drawn from Bhamo namely

- (i) Nearly all plains villages were "protected" by the Kachins.
- (ii) Kachin taxation was necessarily moderate since the Kachins could not afford to lose their proteges.
- (iii) The protected villages were trade depots for the protecting Kachins and this function was at least as important as the fact that they supplied free rice.
- (iv) Kachins carried on an active policy of colonisation, a fact which is entirely inconsistent with the official view that the Kachins were merely a source of pillage and devastation.

1. See Chapter 4. This is the same as "the Nam Wan assigned tract".

2. R.M.L.F. 1900, p.2.

3. Walker (1)



"One of the features of the block of country lying to the east of the Irrawaddy and north of Rhango is the number of these Shan Chinese settlements. The Kachins encourage them to come over and treat them very fairly well, as it is to their interest to do so, for the Shan Chinese are very industrious and cultivate large tracts of paddy land thus ensuring the Kachins from loss if their own taungyas and hill paddy crop turns out badly .... This immigration of the Shan Chinese into the plains east of the Irrawaddy is steadily increasing and should be of great benefit to the country as they are excellent subjects and should quickly develop this tract under a strong rule.

The system of Kachin protection is not confined to the Chinese settlements; all the Shan villages on the Irrawaddy and its main tributaries from the east, such as the Nam Tabet and the Mole Cheung, are under the protection of some neighbouring Kachin Sawbwa. The Kachins do not make many demands on the villages they protect lest they break up for they are useful to the Kachins as places where they can dispose of their rubber or other produce and make purchases of salt and other requirements. The protection lies in securing from the attacks by wandering bands of Kachins and in taking precautions that the villagers are not kidnapped nor their cattle looted. Should any of these events occur then the protecting Kachins would attack the marauders if strong enough and if not would endeavour to secure restitution by ransom or otherwise. The system is very objectionable but cannot be avoided unless the country is placed under British protection. No Shan or Shan-Chinese village can afford to be without its protecting Kachins since otherwise life and property in the village would not be worth a moment's purchase. If the villagers disagree with their protectors and are unable to secure others to assume their protection their only course is to break up the village and settle in an adjoining protected village. (1)

The closing sentences of this quotation make it clear that in coming under British rule the local Shan villagers



merely swapped one form of suzerainty for another. It is open to considerable doubt whether they considered they had had the best of the bargain; and it is certainly very clear that the Kachins were much the losers by the imposition of central authority.

Again although the early British reports make much of the iniquity of the traffic tolls levied by the Kachins, the Chinese traders who were directly concerned seem to have viewed the matter in another light. Elliott notes,

"Much of the opposition of the British can be traced to Chinese influence; all along the frontier between here (Myittha) and Rhame, the Chinese traders have acquired a preponderating influence... they belong to large and powerful syndicates and are generally wealthy men .... the traders can afford to pay the Kachins well for allowing them to pass through their country on the way to and from the (jade and amber) mines, and thus acquire great influence.

... The constant intertribal feuds among the Kachins renders the task of the Chinese a comparatively easy one; whichever side is opposed by the Chinese must win the day and be afterwards dependent on their goodwill for its retention of the supremacy.(1)

The mang (mang) structure of the plains dependencies is clear

Lakpyang is the name given to a large tract of paddy land watered by the Nam Li, Nam Ming and Nam Lang streams and cultivated by Shan Chinese settlements of Nam Ming, Nam Lang, Salaw and Nam Hagh. The Savba who protects these villages is the brother of the Kwitu



Sawbwa and lives at the fort of Tungaw on the loi Nge hill. (1) .... The Tungaw Sawbwas country extends as far as the H'sen Dara in the H'Mai Nka to the North... The (Kwitu) Sawbwa of Seguang Hill ... is a very important Sawbwa his territory extending east to Lahapyang and west to the Irrowaddi. (1)

Each of these tracts as here described appears to cover about 100 square miles, about 2/3rds of the area being in the plain.

Decisions as to policy unfortunately were not made by keenly observant explorers such as Lieutenant Elliott. The extracts from Elliott's report which I have just quoted are from General Walker's abstract; the latter's own comments which appear to run entirely contrary to Elliott's observations may also be quoted as explaining the drift of official British policy.

An important point for consideration is how the extortion of the Kachins on passing travellers which at present damage the prospects of any internal trade may be done away with. These extortionate demands have practically stopped all trade with the Kanti country to the north, and every highway to Chinthees for some distance through the Kachin Hills .... (2)

The poor Kachin was already being told that it was bad for his soul to be prosperous.

The Kachins living in the hills athwart the trade routes seem to be undergoing a downward tendency since all the struggle for existence has ceased.

1. Ibid p.166.

2. Ibid p.169

Formerly they were a fine race and they certainly proved themselves much the better men of the two in their contests with the Burmese Shans .... but since that time all incentive for any exertion has been taken away from the Kachins. With his Shan Chinese settlement at the foot of the hill the Kachin need not fear starvation and his few wants are more than met by the blackmail he levies on the travellers. Under these circumstances with all stimulus for work removed, these Kachins on the trade routes are bound to degenerate, and symptoms of demoralisation seem to be already setting in. (1)

The same convenient administrative theory that the Kachin is bound to degenerate if he is allowed to venture into the plain has been trotted out many times in the recent past as a justification for the policy of segregation. The logic of the argument is not strong. If the Kachin is poverty stricken and warlike he is a bandit; if he is peaceful and prosperous he is degenerate! (2)

In the year following the publication of this report the British were to develop a policy designed to segregate

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1. Ibid p.169.

2. Burma (iv) The argument also tends to be backed up by quite imaginary history; Walter on cit p.170 (date 1892) has "It is within the memory of men still living when the hills east of Bhamo were inhabited by Kachins and it is only the last 20 years that the Kachins further encroached into the Irrawaddy valley." Yet there were Kachins in Monok State at least as early as the beginning of the 19th Century, and Bayfield was reporting encroachments into the Irrawaddy valley in 1836.



the Kachins of the hills from the Shan s the plains. (1)  
 This was supposed to have been the logical outcome of the  
 "lawlessness" of the Kachins and the innate antipathy  
 existing between plainmen and hillmen. One suspects  
 however that official policy was really dictated by  
 administrative convenience; the antipathy did not go very  
 deep. Strettell one of the few early travellers to see  
 through the mask of Burmese propaganda perceived this  
 clearly enough.

Half way through his trip (1874) he cautiously comments:

"I do not believe that the Kachyons are the bloodthirsty  
 ungovernable savages they are generally presented to be;  
 they are no worse I venture to say, than those around  
 us would be, but for the dread of our laws, whips,  
 prisons and gallows: all their greatest atrocities are  
 committed under the influence of liquor, and actuated  
 in the first instance, either by a spirit of revenge  
 or by absolute want. (2)

Some days later his views are still further moderated

"My limited experience leads me to the belief that  
 they are by no means so low in the scale of humanity  
 as they are generally classed. In all dealings I had  
 with them they were honest, and when in their sober  
 senses, cheerful, kind and hospitable, displaying also  
 other desirable characteristics, which go to prove that,  
 with a very little trouble, this tribe might be moulded  
 into a rational well conducted people. (3)

North of the Irrawaddy fertile he found that there were

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1. R.B.E.F. 1894 p.3 & see Chapter VIII.
  2. Strettell (1) 130/31
  3. Ibid p.138.



frequently Shans and Kachins living in the same village so that the professed antagonism between the two groups cannot have gone very deep. In the immediate vicinity of Shans the feeling of antipathy may have been stronger but even here it is difficult to know how much of what Stretzell heard was not officially inspired propaganda. He himself shrewdly noticed the discrepancy between opinion and behaviour.

An old Shan, who saw my revolver, remarked - "Ah that's the sort of thing we want to polish off these Kachyans; something that will kill them by twenties", and on being reasoned with as to the probability of these people being less malicious if honestly dealt with he continued, "no we have tried to purchase safety, but the bribe only kindled the jealousy of the other tribes, and we cannot afford to pay every-one; they are a treacherous set, and can only be likened to a dog's tail which only keeps straight when spliced to a stick". Though this animus exists between the Shans and the Kachyans, nevertheless they are dependent on one another for their daily wants; and carry on a brisk system of barter, the former exchanging with the latter salt, gumpes etc. for cotton, yams, paddy, pigs etc. (1)

Finally, as a demonstration that the antagonism between hillmen and plainmen was entirely conditioned by circumstances, let me quote the case of Mong Si, a mong of North Kachin state, the ruler of which, at the time of the annexation, was a Kachin. Here the political integration of Hill Kachins and Plains Shans had achieved a stable form. The pattern it displays represents, I suggest, the form towards which most

1. Ibid p.131.



of the flux conditions I have described were tending but for interference in the interest of English and Burmese power politics.

Mong Si was thus described by Scott and Hurdman in

1901

(1)

"Mong Si village the residence of the Kachin myo-sa of the tract contains thirty Shan and Kachin houses and is situated in a large fertile paddy plain - there is a fine paengyi kyaung (monastery school) with a group of pagodas ..... a bazaar is held every five days .... there is a good deal of trade in opium, rice, and lac and Chinese caravans visit the mong every year, and bring paws, caravans, coarse cotton cloth carpets, and the like. Formerly they had to pay heavy tolls to the Kachin chiefs, through whose territory they had to pass .... Mong Si is one of the few places where the Shans have not given way before the Kachins but have instead intermingled with and civilised them, and the two races work their fields side by side in amity. It is also one of the few Kachin tracts in North Kachin which did not take part in the rebellion of 1893 against the Sautons .... Mong Si is divided into several circles or townships, each of which is ruled over by a Kachin luwa, a relative of the myosa."

(3)

The rulers are members of the Maran Law lineage. Exemplary behaviour and political efficiency was of no avail in the face of the tiny minds of British officialdom. Kachins

1. In the British administration of the Shan States myo-sa is an official administrative post and that differs from the meaning of the term in the traditional Burmese structure (See Chapter V.)
2. Scott (vi) 11, Article Mongsi.
3. Possibly Maran-Law, my information seems inconsistent.

ruling over Shans? Impossible! A large Kachin political confederation? Most dangerous! Mong Si is nowadays broken up into a Shan section and three or four separate Kachin sections - "in the interests of administrative efficiency!"  
(1)

The role of Buddhism in the cultural flux situation.

It may perhaps by now be conceded that I have conclusively proved that in pre-British times Shan and Kachin were often part of a single political and economic matrix. But, it may be argued, this still doesn't prove that a Kachin could ever "become" a Shan.

As I have shown in earlier chapters, if there are circumstances where certain cultural fields overlap, - as for instance the political and economic fields, - it is still possible to differentiate cultures in terms of alternative criteria, e.g. kinship or religion. But if these fields also overlap then surely I have demonstrated the existence of a flux situation?

The overlapping of the Shan and Kachin kinship systems cannot be demonstrated as a general phenomena for want of sufficient statistical data, though it can hardly be denied that there is such an overlap, particularly

1. The principal subdivisions are:  
Mong Si (Kachin), Mong Si (Shan), New Wa (Kachin)



at the level of chiefs and village headmen.

Elsewhere I have mentioned the large number of Shan marriages in the genealogy of the Kasei Dawa, the leading jade mines chief. The term Kasei does not appear in the literature before 1890, but Strettell travelling in the Mogaung area refers to a powerful Kachin chief the "Kantee Saebwa" and described the people from the amber mines area as Kantee mountaineers. (1) It will be remembered that the term Khampti or Khamti to which much reference was made in Chapter VI seems to appear in the earliest records simply as a lineage name among the Princes of the Mogaung Shan State and its dependencies. In the 1860-1890 period English writers consistently refer to the people of Khamti long as Kanti and it rather looks as if the Kasei dawa or some other powerful Kachin chief in the vicinity had appropriated the title of Khamti Saebwa.

Strettell admits that his account is confused but this simply strengthens my case

The Kachyene, Singphos or Thakins as they are called to the west of the Irrawaddy differ greatly in appearance and costume from their kindred on the opposite bank. They are shorter and more square built with a fairer complexion, flatter features and less hair about the body generally; indeed had I not been told who they were, I should have mistaken them for a Shan tribe - so much more civilised are they to look at than the wild mountaineers of the

eastern range .... The foregoing remarks were particularly refer to the clans of the Mokum (Mukawng) valley, the tribes in the Moohingyin (Mehingyin) district being almost identical .... with those of the east. (1)

In other words, in the only area where we know that for about a century Kachins had been leading a "Shan-like" life in the plains, and where, owing to the special economic advantages of the jade, amber and rubber trades, Kachins were especially prosperous - they had become culturally almost indistinguishable from Shans!

What symptom of differentiation still remains?

#### Religion?

A mile from Mogoung we passed through a Kakhyen village, the inhabitants being Buddhist converts and adopting the Burmese costume; many of the boys had been taught to read and write in their own monastery, which was built by a Sawba named Swablon, a man of considerable means and influence. .... He had also built a small pagoda on the rising ground to the east of Mogoung; the priests who are Burmans are supported by the Kakhyen converts. (2)

What was the motive behind conversion to Buddhism?

Partly perhaps education; but also possibly to gain the protection of an all powerful church. The Burmese Governor of Mogoung appears to have been as blaspheous as any Poona colonel, but it was really the church that mattered

1. Stretton (1) 186.

2. Ibid p.183.



The royal hpoengyee (i.e. Saya Saw) told me he was appointed to his present office by the King with instructions to report direct to the Capital everything that went on here; the dismissal of the late Governor was, he boastingly added, on his report.(1)

No wonder he acquired converts.

The Governor spoke of the Kachyons as a most debased lot, when he had no more compunction in hanging than dogs. He affirmed that he had just ordered the execution of a chief, whose tribe had recently plundered some boats on their way up here from Rhango; but that the sentence had been suspended on the guarantee from the royal hpoengyee that the property would be returned.(2)

This evidence bears out very well what was said in Chapter V regarding the role of Buddhism in the structure of the Burmese state. From the viewpoint of cultural change, assimilation could hardly be carried further. After all, from the Burmese point of view, to become a Buddhist is to become a Burman.

But it will be noted this is not a picture of haphazard cultural disintegration, such as commonly follows the <sup>u</sup>aculturation <sub>^</sub>campaign of Christian missionaries. The picture rather is of the logical and consistent modification of the structure of a small society that results eventually

1. Ibid. p.183

2. Ibid. p.182.

is the small society forming a part of and becoming indistinguishable from a larger society.

Throughout this discussion I have tended to avoid the use of the word assimilation because it suggests to me the piecemeal "swallowing up" of "one culture group" by "another culture group". I prefer the term flux, because it avoids dichotomies of this sort. Changes such as I have described for plains dwelling Kachins are best thought of as a shift in a large scale continuum; there is no jumping out of one cultural box into another one.

The large scale political influence upon the flux situation

I am not in this chapter considering the direct effects upon Kachins of contact with Europeans but it is necessary nevertheless to consider the indirect effects of large scale political events upon the general pattern. In the 18th Century the conflict between Burma and China over the ownership or control of the jade mines area must have had radical implications for almost all Kachins; so also in the 19th Century the shifting political relations between Burma, China and Britain affected the Kachin Hills in many ways long before any significant number of Europeans had put in an appearance in the Kachin Hills area. To see these events in perspective let us consider briefly the sequence of events.



The traditional source of Chinese jade was Chinese Turkestan but in the 17th Century when the Manchu dynasty was blossoming out into its full luxuriance this ancient supply was running out. The existence of jade in the Kamsing area of Burma was known to the Chinese from the 13th Century onwards but comparatively little interest in the matter was taken until the 18th Century; then rather suddenly the jade mines begin to assume major political importance. (1)

Prior to 1750 the Shan States of North Burma in particular Bhamo, Mogaung, Mohayin were dependencies of China. At this date occurred the meteoric rise to power of the Burmese usurper Alaungpaya. One of the first actions of the latter was to subdue the Shan States of the north, but at this stage the Burmese appear to have left the Shan political structure more or less intact.

By 1766 the Burmese were at war with China. The causes of the war were numerous; one of them was the fact that the Burmese had appropriated Mongnit, Heenwi, Mohayin, Ol. Bhamo and Simao (Chiengmai) all of which were regarded as provinces of China. (2)

In October 1766 the Chinese occupied Bhamo and came to

1. Herts W.A. (1) 104-130
2. Luce (1) 119.

griffe with the Burmese a short way to the south at  
 Raungton. The Burmese eventually defeated the Chinese  
 but in the course of the campaign sent a strong column  
 through Mohayin, Mogaung and Salingnew in all probability  
 devastating these regions. (1)  
 The Chinese again seized Shamo  
 in 1769 and severe fighting ensued before the campaign  
 (2)  
 was over.

The outcome of all this was that the States of Shamo,  
 Mohayin and Mogaung ceased to exist as separate entities  
 and became Burmese provinces administered by non-hereditary  
 Burmese was appointed at frequent intervals by Ave. These  
 Burmese officials knew their tenure of office was likely  
 to be short, and took steps to enrich themselves as rapidly  
 as possible. British travellers between 1835-1876 are  
 unanimous in reporting bitter complaints by North Burma  
 Shans of the extortionate exactions of Burmese officials.

Meanwhile the jade trade flourished. The original  
 alluvial workings in the bed of the Uyu Chwang, a  
 tributary of the Chinwin gave place to active mining  
 operations first at Salimo then later at Hucks and Tounaw.  
 A typical compromise was reached between Chinese and  
 Burmese vested interests. The original route for the

1. Ibid p.181.

2. Scott (11) 169.



quarried jade stone was via Hegoang - by river to Talawgyi - thence by mule to Sime Pa and Tsente through a Chinese village called Tachai the chief of which levied a likin tax on the cargo. After 1898 the jade had to travel via Ava! It was taken by river down the Chinwin, then up the Irrawaddy again to Talawgyi and again passed through the hands of the Chao Chia chief at Tachai. (1)

The scale of these activities was considerable. In 1838 some 800 Chinese and 600 Shans were directly engaged in business connected with the jade trade; by 1874 the Burmese revenue derived from the jade trade exceeded Rs 60,000 and during the British regime it has frequently exceeded Rs 1,00,000. (2)

The mines have at all times been technically owned and worked by Chinese though as might be expected in view of the general theme of this book the chiefs concerned have approximated very closely to Shan Sawbwas.

As we have seen already the main trade other than jade between Burma and China was at most periods canalised through Bhamo. As late as 1885 the annual value of this trade was estimated at over 2500,000.

At that time however two major events occurred which

1. W. A. Herts pp. 411

2. R. N. S. F. 1890 - 1923.

basically altered the overall situation. In 1853 the Second Burmese War gave to the British the whole of Lower Burma, thus drastically curtailing both the economic strength and the political prestige of the Ava Government. Then in 1855, as a by product of the Tai Ping rebellion in China, there was a Mohammedan revolt in Yunnan - known to the British as the Panthay rebellion - which upset trade relations between Burma and China for many years and added a new complexity to local frontier politics.

The British on their part freely proclaimed their intention to open up trade routes and build railways between India and China via Burma. The Burmese rather naturally took "evasive action". They took positive action to encourage the development of the overland route through North Bhamo at the expense of the Bhamo route - since the former route was much less accessible to the British, - and at the same time they took every opportunity to impress upon the British the great difficulties that they might expect in attempting trade with China. The reports of Williams (1863), Sladen (1865) Strettell (1874) and Anderson (1875) all show striking agreement on this

1. Sladen (1) 4, 12/14, 16.
2. See bibliography.



point; while the Burmese officially registered approval of all attempts to open up trade, their unofficial action was obstructionist in the extreme.

But the drift of events was much too strong for the Burmese.

Williams (1863) was a member of the British Embassy staff in Mandalay and the purpose of his visit to Rhango was to reconnoitre a route to Tengyueh. The Burmese succeeded to frustrating this but could not disguise the fact that trade prospects were hopeful and that the Kachins in particular were anxious for trade expansion.

Following Williams' frustrated expedition the British Government put strong pressure on the Burmese to permit a full scale British reconnaissance of the Rhango Tengyueh trade route. The Bladen expedition was the result. The Burmese again took every possible action to delay and frustrate this endeavour, but to no avail. Bladen got through and got back. His report was to the effect that prospects of renewed trade were very good and his view of the Kachins were remarkably favourable. He found that on the China side of the border the Kachins were in peaceable relations with their Shan neighbours and concluded that if, as the Burmese insisted, a state of almost open warfare existed on the Burmese side then it must be due to

(1)  
the exactions of the Burmese.

Actually there can be no doubt at all that the Burmese enormously exaggerated the trouble caused by "savage" Kachins in the hope that they would dissuade the British from further interest in the matter.

As a result of Sladen's report the British Government succeeded in getting a British "Assistant Resident" posted permanently to Bhamo, whose duties apparently were to keep an eye on the activities of the local Governor and see that the trade route was kept open. (2) So far as the Burmese were concerned this was the beginning of the end.

The Tengyueh trade did not in point of fact recover to the extent that Sladen had predicted. This was largely because the Mohammedan Chinese (Panthays) failed to consolidate the position they had achieved in 1868 and western Yunnan relapsed once more into anarchy. (3) But, in North Burma generally, once the British had an official representative permanently posted at Bhamo it became impossible for the Burmese any longer to delay the flood of traders, missionaries, and other enterprising parties who might profit by British

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1. Sladen (1) 111/112.

2. Anderson (1) 333/335. The Bhamo Resident was first posted in 1869 and withdrawn again about 1880.

3. Ibid. pp 338/345.



protection.

Burmese policy was now to some extent reversed and the aim was rather to give monopoly concessions to whatever European bid the highest for any particular line of activity in the gift of the Crown.

About 1870 three Europeans named Miller, Marshall and Henri had obtained some sort of crown concession to operate the jade mines, with European machinery. Their enterprise seems to have been a fairly decisive failure, but they managed to get some pumping machinery installed on the site. When their piping failed the local Kachins produced caoutchouc - India Rubber latex - to repair the holes. Up to this date (1) the existence of India Rubber in this area was unknown, but almost immediately a vigorous export trade developed which continued up to 1910, by which time most of the Ficus (2) Elastica trees in North Burma had been tapped to extinction and the value of India Rubber had declined in face of competition from the plantation product. This trade development was a further bait to European enterprise and in 1873/4 the British Government sent one of their Forest

1. Strettell (1) 211.

2. R.N.E.F. 1900 - 1910

officers G.W. Stretzell to investigate and obtain specimens. This date, 1874, is zero point for the full impact of Western Culture contact in this area. The A.B.M. missionaries first arrived that year. The Catholic missionaries had established themselves about one year previously. Capitalist enterprise had started breaking up the existing order in a big way. (1)

"(At Bhamo) there are a few Burman petty traders who carry on a small business up river, in grain and other minor indigenous products, but these are being thinned out, by the demand for brokers, now that a royal monopoly is gradually being established on all articles of commerce, which are collected through a European firm at Mandalay, who have guaranteed to the King a fixed annual revenue on all articles specified in the contract .... Since my arrival Messrs Sutherland and Co have established an agency here much to the disgust of the Chinamen, who find they are being considerably undersold. The gentleman who represents the firm, informed me that his principal business would be among the people north of Bhamo, with whom he intended carrying on a system of barter, exchanging twist, cloth, thread, or whatever they required for ivory, rubber, wax, gums, amber etc .... Before I left Bhamo my informant had commenced his speculations on a somewhat extensive scale and he told me that the people he had to deal with, Kachyans included were remarkably honest and seldom failed to fulfil their promises; in some instances, he said he had advanced Rs500 worth of goods, and that on his next visit to the village the equivalent was always forthcoming .....(2)

Later on, when close to Myithyine, Strettell notes

"The late Mr Graham (Messrs Sutherland's agent) had appointed a broker here; and a Burmese merchant stated that he had left instructions that rubber is hereafter to be regarded as a State monopoly and that none but his broker is at liberty to purchase it." (3)

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1. Strettell (ii) 86.
  2. Strettell (1) 76, 78
  3. Ibid. p.188.



It is scarcely surprising perhaps that Strettell found political conditions decidedly disturbed!

Political conditions in North Burma now steadily deteriorated. Everyone knew that it was now merely a question of time before the British or the French or the Chinese annexed what was left of Burma. It is natural that the Kachins and Chinese should have been anxious to stake as large a claim as possible while the going was good; moreover the loss of transfrontier trade must have very seriously affected the more influential Kachin chiefs and generally upset the balance of authority throughout the frontier area.

The British annexed Upper Burma in 1885 but did not turn their attention to the Kachin area before 1889 by which time conditions were chaotic. The British method of dealing with the situation was the technique of the big stick. In 1889 four punitive columns against the Kachins in one section of the Kachin Hills alone registered the following score

46 villages - 639 houses - burnt.  
 509,000 lbs paddy destroyed.  
 17 dead counted - "their losses were probably higher"  
 63 buffaloes and 4 cows killed.

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(1) W.A.Hertz (1) p.42.

Judging from R.N.E.F. a feature of the punitive actions of the 1889-1900 period was the levying of huge money fines. It appears to have been quite common to fine a recalcitrant duwa up to Rs2,500, and then burn his village if he didn't pay. Protests that so much hard cash was not available were regarded as frivolous evasions!

Thus is peace and prosperity brought to the erring savage!  
The fluctuating influence of individual Kachin families.

It is natural enough that these large scale events should be reflected in the developments within the structure of Kachin society, but such externally induced fluxional changes were not necessarily of the ordinary "culture contact" type. The fluctuations in the prestige of the Gauri chief of Mahtang are an example of what I mean.

I have already suggested that the influence of this chief depended upon his economic control of the main Rhano China trade route. Let us examine this matter in greater detail.

Sladen (1868) concluded that there were three main routes through the Sinalum Kachin Hills in his time. (1)

The northern or Purline route started from Sikaw on the Taping passed through Sihet - Pangling - Fensee (in China) - Manyung. It kept to the north of the Taping river all the way and was controlled, it appears, throughout its length by Jinghpaw chiefs of the Shere-S'ikun lineage. The southern or Sawaddy route started from Sawadi on the Irrawaddy eight miles south of Rhano and then struck due east crossing the hills slightly to the north of the present Rhano-Manhkam

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1. Sladen (1) 122.



motor road. On reaching the Nam Wan one branch ran south east to Mong Mao and the other North east to Mong Wan. The hill section of this route was dominated by the Jinghpaw chiefs of the Hpunggan-Lahpai lineage. The Mong Mao branch on the China side passed through Atoi Lahpai territory, while the Mong Wan route involved chiefs of the Lann-Haren clan. Judging by present distributions a group of Lahtaw chiefs must also have been interested. Records agree however that the Hpunggan were the principal bosses here. (1)

The central or embassy route like the first started from Sikaw but kept to the south of the Taping running through Hantung, Mehtang, Loilung with branches then either to Mong Wan or Latha. The main hill section of this route was Gauri country; the chiefs being of the Aura-Lahpai lineage.

As was explained in Chapter 3, the claims of various Jinghpaw, Gauri and Atoi speaking chiefs in the Sinlun Hills to be all members of closely related lineages of the Lahpai

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1. Anderson (11) 327, 327, 440/442.

Khonkan = Hpunggan.

Kara = Kara-Lahpai

Lakone = N'Ilkum or sometimes lawnkum - Lahtaw

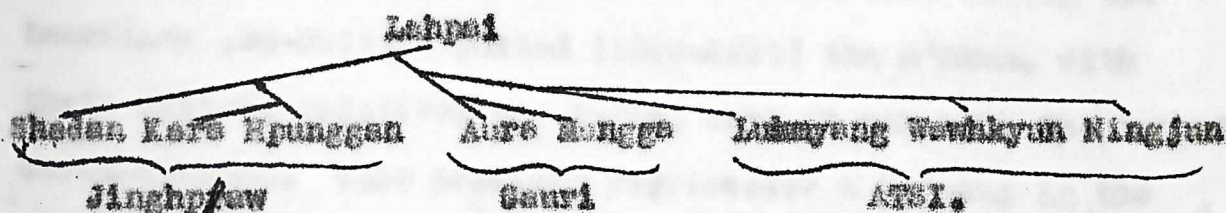
Lanna = Lann - Haren

Mhagon = Hpakkum - Lahtaw

clan can only be considered as a mythological construct rather than as a record of historical fact.

Several largely inconsistent accounts of Gauri Lahpai genealogies occur in the literature. These agree that the Jinghpaw lineage Hpunggen, the Atai lineages Lahmyang, Wawhkyun (Wawchen) and Ningjun (Nungyun), and the Gauri lineages Auro and Mungga are all offshoots of Shaden Lahpai, the senior Lahpai lineage in the South Triangle. The linkage appears to be something like this:—

#### Diagram IX



The introduction of levirate marriages into the various genealogies would appear to make it possible for almost (2) any one of these lines to claim seniority over the others.

1. George (11) ; Hanson (1); Gilhodes (1)
2. Another device favouring ambiguity is to make the lineage ancestors twins. The southern Gauri of the Siam area told Hanson (1) that their country south of the Nampa River was una ga in distinction from the mung ga of the northern Gauri based on Mohtang.

"The division took place after a feast of a certain Jauhpa Khun Wa who made a double dance (hting htang manet) for his twin sons, the last born of which was an una; the first born of the two sought a country of his own — mung kaga (lit. other country), hence the name mung ga"

It may be noted that the name Jauhpa Khun Wa is the typical Shan title Sao-hpa Khun (Sawbwa Khun)



but the point that I would particularly stress here is that the three lines of Lahpai chiefs whose territories were strategically situated in relation to the Shamo/China trade routes <sup>(1)</sup> all claimed to be closely related, despite the fact that Gauri dialect differs substantially from Jinghpaw, and Atei is a basically different language from either.

The exact relationship between the status of the Shamo-N'Nkum chiefs, who appear to have controlled the northern route, and the Lahpai chiefs who held the two southern routes is not certain. Local tradition maintains that during the immediate pre-British period (1880-1893) the N'Nkum, with their affinal relatives the Maran, were at war with the Lahpai confederation. This possibly represented a breakup in the monopolistic position achieved by the Gauris and their friends.

As late as 1879 however relations between the Gauri and N'Nkum chiefs were very amicable, and it was reported that "a younger son of the Chief of Fongline (Fungling) <sup>(2)</sup> has married the Mateng Chief's daughter". Whether the Fungling guma was himself of N'Nkum clan I am uncertain but Sladen's report makes it abundantly clear that he and the

1. The Atei held a strategic position in Mong Mao state and also at Wungaw and Nawhkyun immediately north of the "northern route".

2. H. Soltan (1) 57.

"Ponsee Chief" were in 1868 both subordinate to the chief of "Barey" - i.e. Shans.

In the competition between the several available routes, the Gauri seem to have early established their ascendancy. The central route was called by Sladen the "embassy route" because traditionally this was the route taken by the decennial embassies which Burma sent to Peking from the beginning of the 19th Century onwards. (1) It was clearly the main route in 1835, for Hannay picked up the following information in Rhango

The road from Bamo to Loailong (Loiling) is through the hills which are inhabited by Kachyons and Palongs after which it passes through the country of the Shans called by the Burmans Kopyidsung (i.e. Ko-Shan-Pyi). The road is ascribed as being very good and quite a thoroughfare.... Besides the trade carried on at Bamo by the Chinese, the Shans, Palongs and Singfos under China are great purchasers of salt gunpes (ngapyl) dried fish and rice, but particularly salt (2)

Sladen on information gathered at Latha in 1868 described the Central route as

"the route which from time immemorial had constituted the grand highway between China and Burmah." (3)

In 1868 however this route

"had been practically closed for more than five years owing to the murder of seven unoffending

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1. Sladen (11) 106.
  2. Hannay (1) 93.
  3. Sladen (1) 106



Kakhyens by a drunken Burmese official in Bhamo. The principal chiefs through whose districts the road passes, having applied in vain for justice and redress, entered into a compact to avenge their wrongs by forswearing all communications with Bhamo and combining in a plan of reprisals on Burmese villages." (1)

This blockade, if it was a fact, was launched at an inopportune moment for, as we have seen, trade at this period was in any case greatly reduced owing to the Penthay rebellion, and anyway the Burmese were anxious to deflect what trade was left to the overland Hsienwi route. The small amount of trade remaining to Bhamo in 1868 was thus carried by the northern or "Penline" route and the Gauri and Hpunggan chiefs by their feud against the Burmese had merely deprived themselves of revenue.

When Sladen appeared on the scene and announced his intention of compelling the Burmese to reopen the trade with China the Gauri chiefs quickly decided that it was time their feud with the Burmese was forgotten. They were clearly alarmed that the new British trade might be canalised through the N'Idum territory instead of their own. For this reason the Gauri chiefs were most effusive in their welcome to Sladen. When he returned, "31 Kakhyen Chiefs" accompanied him to Bhamo and carried out a ritual pledge "to protect and

suggest traders of every denomination who may desire safe conduct across their hills." He lists the villages from which the 31 G chiefs came - they were all from villages in the vicinity of the "central route" - that is from villages of the Gauri tract.

The Mahtang (M attin, Matin, Muthin) chief was an effective mung duwa, paramount chief, of the whole of this tract. This tract has been given a Shan style name Mong Hka but it is not clear whether it was considered a dependency of Bhama or of Latha. The chief in Gladen's time was a youngish man and appears to have lived on until about 1907. His name was Mung-ga Tang (Mong Hka Tang). Gladen has much to say of him

"A man of rare excellence and intelligence though only a hill chieftain in the wilds of Kakkhyen land. He and the Loaylon (Loilung) Sarbes are sons of the old Muthin chief, who during his lifetime was acknowledged to be the richest and most powerful of all the hill chiefs bordering on Burma. He too was the chief who had headed the confederacy to avenge the Burman murder of seven of their race ....

1. Ibid p. 120, 141.
2. It is presumably on this account that Enriquez asserts that "the Gauris" country was occupied originally by Shans. Tai loi perhaps! They would certainly be strange Shans to live on the vastical inclines of the Sinalum Hills.
3. Ibid. p. 129.



his son was now present to wipe out existing feuds ... The present Maitin Sakhwa spoke Burmese with ease and fluency his ideas and principles .... marked him in a higher degree of civilisation than that which is compatible with the ordinary supposed state of a semi barbarous hill race." (1)

Anderson describes him as having

manners and style ... fully equal to those of any Burmese or Shan gentleman. His dress was a mixture of Shan and Chinese, but his hair was arranged in Burmese fashion. He proved to be perfectly acquainted with Burmese and Chinese. (2)

The Maktang Chiefs lived in fine style.

The chief's house is a Kakhyen palace ... It is approached by a broad flight of stone steps, which lead to an arched gateway and walled enclosure of Chinese design. The house itself is a wooden structure built on the elongated single ridge principle peculiar to the Kakhyens. It is palatial in size, finish and ornamentation as compared with the residence of ordinary Kakhyen saubwas. (3)

Writing in 1923 Enriquez reports upon the earthly remains of these Kachin plutocrats.

A Kachin grave is usually a conical thatched hut surrounded by a deep trench. Gauri graves however are quite different and are solidly built of stone. In shape they resemble Chinese coffins .... quite the most remarkable tombs in the country are those of the Suwas of Maktang, which are built of massive slabs of granite, and are handsomely ornamented and

1. Bladen (1) 215
2. Anderson (11) 319.
3. Bladen (1) 116

and carved in Chinese style. The facade is like the portico of a house, with imitation doors. These tombs of which there are three in Mahtang were built by the Dumas during their own lifetime and are in fact family vaults.....

It seems perfectly clear that these Chiefs aspired to achieving the full status of Shan Chinese Sawbas. What happened to them?

Because trade remained in the doldrums, their revenues fell far below their former level, but their influence remained considerable right up to the time of the annexation. The British then left them alone for some time being uncertain whether their territory was properly a part of Burma or China. When they decided to annex, they considered for a moment a policy of true indirect rule, - that is it was proposed to appoint the Mahtang Duma to the official post of Laung ok and make him responsible for the whole tract. <sup>2</sup> The proposal was turned down. A British Civil Officer was posted to the hills the following year and Mahtang was compensated with a Roman Catholic Mission Station!

Mungga Tang was now an old man but still a power in the land

Mr. Dawson (in 1896) like his predecessors was struck by the intelligence and force of character of the old blind Mahtang Duma. He is it would appear dissatisfied with his present position. He was formerly given by the Chinese a portion of the tolls between Nampaung and Mawlaing. Since his land was formally included in British territory this has been refused him....The Kauris are above all other Kachins, exclusive and

1. Henriquez (11) 120.
2. R.N.E.P. 1896 p.4.



jealous of their rights. They are clannish and united among themselves. They have for instance no village boundaries. The Hatin Qua is the strong man among them and his decision is already regarded as binding in feud cases.<sup>1</sup>

The decline and fall under British rule is dramatic in its completeness. In 1920 we find Sao Doi, Qua of Mahtang and son of Mungga Tang appearing in the Assistant Superintend-  
ante Court at Simlum to sue one of his own commoners Lazum Kampang of Muma for damages for getting his daughter with child and he is awarded Rs 30 and six hna<sup>2</sup> the normal compensation for a commoners bastard!<sup>3</sup> of old time custom Kawi Ma Hwang says

As the compensation for giving a bastard to a chief's daughter is very heavy the compensation may be paid whenever the man responsible is able to pay....by instalments over several generations if necessary

1. Ibid.

It should not be inferred from this that the "Gauris" were in fact anything remotely resembling a "clan." The sub-chiefs of villages even in the immediate vicinity of Mahtang were not even Lachpa but Maran; and the Gauri commoners were of Atai, and Maru extraction. The solidarity observed by Mr. Dawson was purely political.

2. Carraplett (i) 115.

Rs 30/-, 1 8 span gong, 1 necklace, 3 cows, 1 putesee, 1 dah.  
"Case heard before Gauri elders!"

3. Kawi Ma Hwang (i) 62. gives standard compensation for the Simlum Hills area.

1 small calf, 1 gong, 1 pass, 1 small iron cooking pot, 1 dah, 1 necklace, 1 pass "to wrap up the child", 1 cow buffalo "with milk for the child."

4. Ibid p.63.



In the old days the honour of the Mahtang Chief's daughter must have been worth a king's ransom!

Enriquez met Sao Dui in 1921 or thereabouts

The Lephal Buwan, who once ruled the Gauris have now fallen into complete insignificance. They have less standing even than the village Salanga or elders. While visiting the tombs of this once illustrious family I met the present Lu, Sao Dwe, cutting wood in the jungle while his wife carried home the logs.<sup>1</sup>

This remarkable reversal of fortune is a species of what in the next Chapter I shall define as "negative" cultural change; that is to say the effect of contact with the west has here reversed a previously existing change process. Until the British appeared the Gauri chiefs were turning into Shan-Chinese; after the British arrived the process was reversed and they turned back into "typical Kachins" again.

The motivation is clearly economic. The British cut off the Gauri chief's revenue; but they did not cut off his obligations. They planted a mission station next door to his capital. The early converts of this mission were the commoner adherents of the Gauri chief. It was these commoners rather than the chief himself who benefitted from the coffee plantation started by the missionaries. Sinlum Civil Court replaced the arbitrating legal function of the paramount chief. The chief lost his income; he lost his judicial status; he ceased to be necessary to the community.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Enriquez (11) 126.

2. For the very different fate that befell the Mahtang Guna's clan brother - the chief of the Southern Gauris who had the sense to become a Christian, see Chapter VIII.



Yet the close association of the Gauri with the Chinese and Shan-Chinese across the border has not entirely ceased. In 1983 mayan (slaves) still existed in only slightly disguised form

It seems that the Gauris are more allied to the Chinese than are other Kachins. They have a curious custom of adopting Chinese children when they have no surviving issue of their own. Such adopted children take Gauri names and become Chinese. There are usually four or five of these pure blooded Chinese in every Gauri village.<sup>1</sup>

I would myself hesitate to call any group of humanity in this part of the world "pure blooded" anything but it is certainly still true that many Gauri households have kindred in Chinese territory; but whether these should be rated as Chinese, Shan-Chinese, Maingtha, Yawgin, Atsi, Kachin or Moso is a moot point, and quite irrelevant.

### SUMMARY.

In this Chapter I have tried to underline certain features in the Kachin-Shan flux pattern which have cropped up in previous Chapters:- the economic dependence of hills on plains; the tendency (where the plains political structure is weak) for the hill people to tax the plains; the importance of trade routes through the hills as a source of revenue to the hillmen; the tendency for the hill chiefs in conditions of affluence to adapt Shan manners and modes of organisation. Above all I have tried to show that the administrative doctrine

1. Enriquez (11)126.

that Shan and Kachin are entirely distinct and innately antagonistic does not stand up to investigation. It is true certainly that since 1890 the Administration has systematically sifted the human material and sorted out Kachin from Shan: Since 1890 all those processes which formerly served to lead to assimilation and cultural flux have been officially frowned upon, e.g. village "protection", caravan tolls, private trading depots. Perhaps as a consequence of this the modern Kachin and the modern Shan really are sharply distinguishable entities. If so the British have only themselves to thank for the problems they have thus created. I agree that to reverse the policy of cultural segregation at this stage may prove very difficult. In this Chapter however I have been merely concerned to show that, at the date when the British first appeared, the hill and plains communities though split up into many groups culturally were both economically and politically very thoroughly integrated one with another. There was thus a constant interchange between plains and hills not only of persons but of ideas; in pre-British days the institutions of the two parts of the total society would never deviate very far one from the other.

The general similarity between the pattern of events in the Sinlun-Shamo area 1860-1900 and that of the Khampti-Singpho area of Assam 1820-1850 is apparent and is of



considerable sociological interest. In some instances the parallel seems so close that I am tempted to use evidence from the later well documented period to reinforce some of the more doubtful inferences in my earlier analysis.

For example, to revert to the Assam situation once more, it will be remembered that I inferred that the pre-British political hierarchy in the Tengapani area took the very "cross-cultural" form of (from top to bottom);- Assam Rajah - <sup>"Khamprishan"</sup> "Gohain" - Kachin Chief - Shan or Kachin headman - Assamese or Shan labourer. On the evidence this very complicated pattern may have seemed unjustified. The following however is Scott and Hardiman's description (1901) of the village of Sikaw; (not the Sikaw mentioned earlier but a village 45 miles south of Bhamo on the edge of Mong Hsat State);→

Sikaw was formerly ruled by the Lwelon (Kachin) duwa of Lwelon one day to the north east and he owed nominal allegiance to the Mongnit Saubwa. It is said that about 1850 there was a duwa at Sikaw also, the brother of the Lwelon duwa..... The duwa of Sikaw died in 1851 and the villagers elected Ma Naw, a trader from Lwelon, as namtains and in return he was given the free labour of the villagers in the cultivation of his fields. Sikaw and Kyunbintha were the only villages with which he had anything to do.

In 1885 Ma Naw, the claimant to the sawbanship of Mongnit established himself in Sikaw valley and put in Ma Naw as saub of all the villages from the Irrasady upwards to Sin village and placed him in charge of the three Kayains (circles) of Chingma, Lathang, and Sin. In 1889 the three kayain-oks fled and in November 1887 (sic) Ma Naw was appointed mya-oh of the Sinkan township.



Unfortunately we are not told much about the ancestry of Ma Hax but judging by his name he must have been a Kachin if only a commoner. It will be seen that the overall hierarchy (pre-British) is the same as that postulated in the Assam instance namely:-

Burmese King - Shan Sawbwa of Mongait - Kachin Aung of Lashio - Kachin sub-chief or headman at Siao - Shan and Burmese villagers. What is unusual is that this bi-cultural organisation seems to have been maintained for a while even after the British annexation.

Nevertheless though Ma Hax personally was permitted to become a government official the administration insisted upon economic and political segregation. A report upon military operations in this area in 1890 refers to Ma Hax as "Upper Binkan Hyo-ok",<sup>1</sup> and it would appear that Kan Hlaing, who was still in hiding in the vicinity, considered that he had a feud against Ma Hax on account of his defection to the British. The very involved political inter-relationships between Kachins and Shans in this area are clearly shown but at the conclusion of such seemingly unnecessary punitive action the British imposed terms on the local Kachins -

"among other things the Lwessing and Tonhôn Kachins bound themselves not to attempt to exercise authority over the Shans in the plains country

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1. H.N.E.F. 1890 "Correspondence connected with operations in Momeik" pp. 3-7.



This was clearly simply a matter of principle. The evidence is perfectly clear that in this locality the Shans and Kachins (prior to British intervention) had been not only close friends and allies, but also by the look of it relatives.

## Chapter VIII

### The effects of Culture Contact with the West.

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#### Introductory.

The critic who started this book expecting from the title to embark upon a study of Culture Contact in its usual sense of the "impact of the West upon native institutions" may reasonably consider that the whole issue has been shirked. Here we have been shirked. Here we have been laborously studying Kachins of 1825, 1866 and 1891; what relevance have these fabulous characters to the Kachin of 1946? And it is a fair complaint.

At the present time there are several Kachins with University degrees; there is atleast one qualified doctor; several Kachin Officers had most distinguished military careers during the recent war. One I believe arrived at being a Major and a <sup>M.C.</sup> ~~B.E.C.~~; there were several of the rank of Captain. I know several Kachin motor mechanics who would be considered skilled in any company; Kachin signals operators were among the best in the Indian and Burma armies. Stevenson recently crystallised the situation thus: "Nowadays you are liable to meet a convoy of jeeps in Rangoon proudly labelled Sinlun Kachin Co-operative."

In short the whole situation is at the present moment undergoing extremely rapid change of the typical "Western



Culture Contact" type. I would not in any way attempt to belittle the importance of these changes, they are fundamental. Moreover still more important changes may be immediately imminent. The whole future of the Kachin Hills Area as here described is linked with complicated issues of world politics, and no one can gainsay that the life of every individual Kachin present and future will be drastically effected by the decisions and developments over the next ten years with respect to the Administration of the Frontier Areas of Burma.

In this book however I am not so much concerned with Culture Change as a problem of practical administration. What I am concerned to analyse is process. My theme is not that "Western Culture Contact" is unimportant but that it is only a specially drastic species of a general and normal phenomenon.

Where I am concerned with Western Culture Contact however is in those instances where administrative or missionary activity though the agents of the paramount power interferes with, or even reverses, the fluxional changes already inherent in the existing situation.

It is very commonly held that Western contact enormously increases the rate of general development in a primitive community, and that the ills that develop are merely due to the rate of change. Frequently one hears the view expressed that the role of a benevolent administration should be to slow down this rate of change so that development can be "natural"

and unstrained. Unfortunately administrative action seldom has this effect, indeed it is impossible that it should have. One cannot catch up an express train by studiously travelling in a slow one and efforts to "lessen the impact of the West" only serve to increase the dependence of the "primitive" group upon benevolent authority. Kennedy who characterises the Dutch policy in Indonesia as an "anti-acculturation policy" remarks that the result is

intact and flourishing native cultures,  
a just and comprehensive legal system,  
a basically sound native agricultural economy  
— and an Indonesia so far behind the times  
that it is helpless unless protected by some  
strong, modern, outside power.<sup>1</sup>

In Burma even the virtues of the system are lacking.

It is quite beyond the scope of this book to make a detailed study of all the effects of Western Culture Contact on the Kachins. The field is far too widespread the documentation far too dispersed. I intend instead to limit myself to the consideration of three particular agents of "acculturation" — the Government as Administrator, the Government as Employer — especially through the medium of the Army —, and the Missions. Furthermore I shall confine myself principally to the consideration of policy rather than of practice.

I am concerned with the general consequences of "Culture Contact", not with its particular manifestations. The Kachins

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L. Kennedy (1)



on the whole have been very fortunate in their European administrators and missionaries, and government policy on the ground often has a very different (and more beneficent flavour) than when issued as an official instruction from Rangoon or Simla. The Kachin Hills Regulations form a vague and flexible instrument which can be interpreted in many different ways, but nevertheless taking the long view the pattern works itself out regardless of the good intentions of particular individuals. For that reason I feel justified in using Government Blue Books<sup>1</sup> as my source of material. Though the facts in such reports may often be tidied up so as to stimulate approval in high places the general trend of official action is clearly revealed by such documents.

### The Government as Administration.

In the course of the last two Chapters we have seen how the British Administration in Assam and Burma reacted to the Kachins in its initial attempts to establish law and order. To these early administrators the issue was extremely simple. The plains people complained that the hill people were bandits who extorted blackmail from innocent cultivators in the plains. Very well, the hill people must be made to understand that there was a new power in the land. Punitive expeditions, the burning of villages and of crops

might seem strong medicine but the first and most crucial necessity was law and order; the hill people must be made to understand that if they had complaints they must resort to legal process, they could no longer take the law into their own hands.

The policy that ensued - and here I am referring to the Burma rather than to the Assam field, - was the entirely logical outcome of this emphasis on law and order and administrative "tidiness". The whole tendency was to stabilise and codify in all directions. As Government saw it

The annexation of the territories formerly subject to the Court of Ava has imposed on us the duty of establishing peace and security within the settled districts; but except for this purpose there is no need to interfere with the savage tribes along our borders; and it has always been recognised that it is unnecessary, in cases of this kind, to push forward the administrative frontier as far as the extreme limits within which we claim supremacy.<sup>1</sup>

There at the very beginning is the germ of the whole matter. This directive of 1892 contemplated merely drawing a line between "Tribes and clans within our line of outposts and settled villages" and "Tribes and clans outside of that line." The intention was that Kachin villages within the settled area "must be placed in every way upon the same footing as the Burmese Shans and others among whom they

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1. RNEF, 1893, Appx. "General Instructions issued to Civil officers on duty in the Kachin Hills, season 1892-93."



have settled."<sup>1</sup>

This did not suit the tidy minds of the officials concerned and the following year policy was revised. "The Kachin Hills were to be administered in so far as they were included within the provisional area of our administration on distinct lines from the lowland tracts, where alone the ordinary law and the ordinary taxes were to be enforced."<sup>2</sup>

Thus there were now three areas - the settled area of the Burmans and Shans, the settled (hill) area of the Kachins and the unadministered Kachin area which was only to be interfered with sufficiently to maintain law and order.

It will be noticed that there is a crucially significant variation in the concept of what constitutes a Kachin between 1892 and 1893. In the first directive there is no suggestion of a segregation of hills from plains. It is frankly recognized that there are Kachins living in the valleys among the Shans and Burmans. But by 1893 the Kachins have suddenly become a hill people.

Thereafter it gradually became a dogma of official thought that the Kachins ought to reside in the Kachin Hills and not in the plains and valleys. Whenever they were found in the plains and valleys they were asserted to be degenerate. As late as 1938 Stevenson was producing statistics designed to "prove" that Kachins who settled in the plains rapidly

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1. Ibid.

2. H.N.E.F., 1897, para 11.

died out; and one of the chief themes of his "Kachin Regeneration Scheme" was a "back to the hills movement."<sup>1</sup>

Yet the economic implications of this artificial segregation fairly stared the early administrators in the face. Already in 1891 a column had been sent to Mainghkwan to explore and prepare "for our future control of the Mukong Valley." The column commander reported to the following effect

"The population of the valley is almost entirely Kachin. The Kachins in these parts are reported to lose their turbulent qualities in descending from the hills and to become lazy and peaceable like the Shans who formerly inhabited the valley and whom they have gradually ousted. The valley is almost entirely free from crime or disturbance of any kind. Each village is governed by its Sawbwa or Agyiwa. In the rare cases in which a serious crime is committed the leading headmen combine to punish the offender. In view of the peaceful condition of the valley.....it is proposed to postpone for the present the work of bringing the Mukong valley under direct administration." <sup>2</sup>

And indeed the Mukong was left alone in peace and prosperity until certain interested parties in 1926 decided to enhance their political reputations by "releasing the slaves", with economic consequences that have already been commented upon.

The Kachin Hills Regulations first drafted in 1893 - which with slight modification still apply - were designed to achieve the following ends:

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1. Burma (iv)

Sinlum Report. 1938.

(Here as elsewhere I quote these reports from memory, as I have been unable to obtain copies in England).

2. R.N.E.F., 1892, para 32.



To put a stop to raiding on the plains, to attacks on traders and other travellers, and to feuds between tribes and individuals; to prevent or punish heinous crimes, to check as far as possible cruel or inhuman practices; to provide readily available means for the decision of disputes between tribes and individuals and thus ensure their peaceable settlement and to enable such control to be kept as may be requisite over matters falling under the following heads - Arms, Excise, Opium and Forests; attaining the above ends without unduly interfering with local customs so as to cause needless irritation.<sup>1</sup>

Such objectives might be thought blameless enough, but from what has been said in previous chapters it is clear the first items the veto on "raiding on the plains" and "attacks on traders" really implied an attack on the basic economic balance of Kachin society. If the Kachins could not levy protection money from their plains neighbours, or tolls on the trade convoys passing through their territory then inevitably they were forced to become brigands.

The sequence of events stands out with perfect clarity in the annual reports of the Administration. Segregation is followed by intermittent raiding; raiding is followed by punitive action, and more direct administration of the administered Hill Tracts; this is followed by raids from the unadministered area into the administered area; further punitive action is followed up by an extension of the boundary of direct administration, and the cycle starts over again.

Gradually however the expenses of administration increase and the frontier settles down. The money that is being fed

1. R.N.E.F., 1894, para 11.



into the hills area through the presence of garrison troops, P.W.D. expenditure gradually comes to exceed the sum levied as tribute and finally is sufficient to balance the economy altogether.<sup>1</sup> Indeed in later years with large numbers of men constantly employed in the army and military police, the hills, despite segregation, were fairly prosperous.

It will be noted that the intention was to interfere with "native law and custom" as little as possible. Indeed there are still officers of the Burma Frontier Service who confidently assert that the Kachins are governed by "indirect rule." Nothing could be further from the facts, though for a brief moment indirect rule of some sort was considered in the case of the Mahtang chief mentioned in the last Chapter.

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1. The importance of the P.W.D. expenditure to the general economy was fully recognised. In S.N.E.F., 1906, para 7 there is a suggestion that

"all road repairs except such as require technical skill should be carried out by the Kachin Chiefs through whose jurisdiction the roads pass. At present all profits on repairs to Public Works Department roads are made by Indian Contractors.

The strange Government obsession that unless the paramount power levied as money tribute it would not be respected sometimes led to curious situations. When about 1938 it was decided to administer the north of the Htawng area between Htawng and the Makh there was virtually no currency circulating in the area at all. A Government road was built from north to south at considerable cost and the Government officer in charge of the area then a ceremonial progress along the road paying out road construction money on route; on his return journey he collected practically exactly the same money back again as house tax. Across the border the Chinese authorities who impose forced labour on their primitive tribesmen are regarded as most uncivilised.



In 1896 it was proposed that in order to set off the loss incurred by the chief in coming under British rule

"he should be given the position of taungok among the Northern Kauris, collect their tribute and pay it in, keeping some portion as commission and that he should have some authority to settle disputes and petty civil cases. The proposal has many points to recommend it....He would be able to control them throughout the year which we cannot do without a post in the hills. This plan would satisfy the Duwa, who is aggrieved, and would be acceptable to the Northern Kauris. The disadvantage of the plan is that it is easier to appoint a man than to remove him, but the appointment might in the first instance be made personal and not hereditary, though he has a son who bids fair to succeed to his father's influence."

One detects here the cooling voice of propaganda, the practical man on the spot trying to "put across" a sensible policy to remote autocrats in Calcutta. The scheme was turned down. The next year (1896) it was decided to have European civil officers permanently posted in the hills, and Sinlum, half a day's march from Mahtang was selected as Civil Station.

The taungok (lit. hill officer) is a native official who acts as the channel of communication between the European Assistant Superintendent and the village headman. Nowadays he has limited magisterial powers. Originally taungoks seem to have been themselves mostly chiefs of village headmen who were selected because of their traditional



status of authority. Since however the taungok was constantly required to transmit written instructions and submit written reports, some degree of education gradually became a pre-requisite of appointment. His status vis a vis the individual villages<sup>is</sup> was very much what that of the mung duwa (tract chief) would have been if a real system of indirect rule had been attempted. His magisterial functions were precisely those which might have fallen to the mung duwa if the traditional hierarchy had been retained. The authority of the mung duwa therefore tended to decline even in those cases where the Government had not broken up the structure by force. A report dated 1908 notes that the Kachin villages in the K<sub>2</sub>tha area are more dispersed than those in Bhamo and shows that the close parallel between Kachin and traditional Burmese structure was fully recognised

In Myitkyina and Bhamo there is in each group of villages one duwa, and, in the hamlets under him in which he does not reside, a man called an akyiwa in Myitkyina and nawmaing (salang wa) in Bhamo. This is the (Burmese) myathuay system; the duwa is the myathuay, and the akyiwa or nawmaing the ywagaung. In Katha each tract is what (in Burma) would be called a daing (circle); the head of the tract is a daing - or mye-thuay and in each village is the myathuay. It is in fact the myathuay system. In Katha the head of each hamlet is a duwa or thuay and collects the revenue, and the head of the group is the superior duwa or myathuay who does nothing except accept a few dues.....<sup>1</sup>

The "superior duwa" is what I have called a mung duwa and is correctly compared with the myathuay. In the same way the taung-ok is comparable to the

1. R.R.E.F. 1908 para 17.



myo-ok the non-hereditary type of myo ruler under the old regime. Once the authority of the taungok was established the mung duwa "has nothing to do except accept a few dues" a non reciprocal type of status which has no role in a normal society. As a matter of fact the "superior duwas" of Katha in 1908 seem to have been largely a "British invention" designed to "simplify assessment and collection of tribute (1) and reduce the chances of boundary disputes arising", but the general principle applies over the whole area. The mung chiefs lost their traditional judicial role as arbitrators and became merely second rate agents of government responsible for collecting revenue. Yet the theory was that villagers should continue to pay their "traditional obligations" to chiefs. Naturally since the villagers got nothing in return for these gifts the giving fell into disuse. Nowadays mung chiefs scarcely exist anywhere south of the Triangle, except in the Kachin Tracts of the Northern Shan States which are relatively speaking very indirectly administered.

Alongside this establishment of a governmental magistracy independent of the traditional hierarchy of chiefs and headmen was the tendency to codify

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1. R.N.S.T. 1907 para 23.

(1)

the law. In theory cases were mostly settled in accordance with native law and custom under the Kachin Hills Regulations. Government magistrates, i.e. the Assistant Superintendents or his taungoks were supposed to try the case in company with native assessors, and to be guided by the assessors as to the correct judgement in traditional law. This is in fact the procedure that is still followed but it bears practically no relation to the processes of justice among the Kachins in pre-British days.

The Administration and "Native Law and Custom"

It is a peculiarity of administration at the colonial level that where the people administered are considered "primitive", the judicial roles of legislator, prosecuting council, judge and executioner are rolled into one and expressed in the person of the European Resident Official - in the Kachin Hills known as the Assistant Superintendent,

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1. R.N.M.F. 1907 para 24.

"If the facts of a few typical cases of each kind and the decisions pronounced on them by experienced officers were concisely stated the compilation of Kachin customary law principles would probably be of great value.

The codification was later provided by a Government handbook published in 1929. Carapiett (i) pp.81/119



or, to the Kachins, the bun duwa - the Lord of the Hills.

Since the British are deeply imbued with democratic ideas, so that they feel that law should originate in the wishes of the people, it is common in all parts of the Empire to find that the law under which primitive areas are administered is framed around what is generally believed to be traditional law and custom. Law in this sense is thought to be a system of formal rules and penalties, and provided the penalties inflicted for particular crimes correspond to the traditional penalties for similar crimes, it is held that "native law" is being administered.

I do not intend to embark upon a lengthy discussion of the nature and processes of Kachin law but it is important to understand the fundamental changes that have been brought about in the nature of the judicial system under the British regime.

The Kachins regard almost every type of offence as a debt (hka). Once the contract for the settlement of that debt has been agreed, the actual settlement of it is a commercial process which may be prolonged or brief according to the means of the parties concerned. Sometimes the actual payment of the hpaga agreed in settlement of a blood feud may take generations, but provided the debt is recognised

the feud is in no danger of breaking out again. (1) In this sense the contract to settle a blood feud is of precisely the same kind as the contract to settle a marriage price, and the details of what is actually to be paid over are arrived at in precisely the same way, - that is by third party agents (kasa) from each side getting together and haggling the matter out between themselves.

The settlement of every kind of dispute is first expressed as a particular number of ritual items (hpaga). In most cases these hpaga are divided between those which must be paid over immediately and those which can be paid over a period. Those which must be paid immediately are items required for and used in a sacrifice to the nats in which the latter are called in to witness (a) that the dispute has been settled (b) that the compensation agreed is in accordance with standard form and that such and such items remain outstanding. Provided this ritual has been carried through the case is settled; if the ritual has not been

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# 1. Kawlu Ma Nawng (1) 55

"If the whole compensation is not paid up after the expiry of a year and the performance of the final peace ceremony, any remaining articles can be demanded slowly from the children or grandchildren in the course of generations.

If they are not demanded because of some mutual agreement between the parties there is no question of the feud remaining outstanding as the parties have usually exchanged women between them and have become related groups. These related groups do not trouble about the small amount of compensation outstanding.



carried through then the case is not settled no matter how many hpaga have been paid over.

The number of possible offenses is quite small and the number of hpaga involved in each is well known. The principal ones are homicide, death of a woman in childbirth, death by accident (employers' liability), restraint, various degrees of bodily hurt, rape, adultery, theft, desertion and illegitimate offspring. Formal rules in the form of mnemonics specify the number of hpaga in each case; for example:—

du bunglat hpaga latse; zaw bunglat manga shi  
In a chief's blood feud 100 hpaga; in a commoner's blood feud fifty. (1)

Details of what the various items are are also precisely specified by tradition; these being symbolic are easy to remember — cowries for the teeth and nails, spears for the hands and feet, swords for the toes and fingers, a necklace for the entrails, a coat for the skin and so on. In different localities the formal lists vary somewhat but locally there is no dispute on such a matter. Kawlu Ma Nawng gives the full list of 100 items for a Chief's blood feud as recognised in the Hukawng as well as several other lists for less grave offences and they correspond closely with lists that have been recorded from other localities. (2)

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1. cf H.F.Hertz (1) 163
  2. Ibid; also Kawlu Ma Nawng (1) 50-57.

Of the 100 items in the Chiefs' blood-fee list the first 33 are "for the burial ceremonies" and must be paid immediately; the next 39 are to replace the bodily organs of the deceased; while only the last 28 are actually intended as compensation for injury done. (1)

Under traditional law the role of the chiefs and elders in their judicial capacity can be summarized as follows. Their first task was to persuade the parties to a dispute to submit to judgement and arbitration. This done the actual judgement was a simple matter since everyone knew the facts and it was merely a matter of deciding which of several offences had been committed. The elders also decided, according to the gravity of the offence, whether all or only selected items of the formal list must be paid. Significantly the item that was scarcely ever omitted was the maraw nga - "maraw buffalo" - the animal to be sacrificed to the maraw nat. (2)

After this preliminary arbitration the elders sent to the agents (kasa) of disputing parties a bundle of bamboo splits about 8 inches long and  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch wide. These bamboo splits represented the tally of the agreed number of hpaga and it is then up to the kasa, with the elders intervening as

1. Kawlu Ma Nawng (1) 55.
2. H.F. Hertz (1) 153.



arbitrators, to get together and decide what the various tallies are going to represent. <sup>(1)</sup> This is a crucial feature of the whole procedure and does not seem to have been understood by the majority of British administrators. Each tally stick represents an agreed item on the formal traditional list of hpaga and is referred to as if it was the item in question; but the items actually handed over in the act of settlement do not necessarily correspond at all to this list. Thus if one tally stick represents a male buffalo, it may be decided after much haggling that a pig will do instead - thereafter whenever the pig comes into the argument - if for instance it is sacrificed to the nats - it is referred to as a buffalo; or if the item is outstanding it will be referred to as a buffalo, although everyone knows that only a pig is now at stake. All sorts of substitutions are permissible, packets of opium for animals, cotton cloth for a Chinese Mandarin's jacket, a couple of vegetable seeds for a pair of meteoric stones <sup>(2)</sup> and so on. But what is not done is to reduce the number of hpaga below what has been agreed by the elders.

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1. Kawlu Ma Nawng (1) 54. The same procedure applies to the settlement of trade debts.
  2. Meteoric stones are theoretically required to represent the eyes of the deceased in a case of homicide. Thrawn jum - a kind of seed - usually serve instead. Kawlu Ma Nawng (1) 56; H.F.Hertz (1) 153.

Again it is a matter of ritual; the nats require that the full list of traditional items be handed over; substitution items can be agreed to, but not an elimination of items.

The best of the early Administrators had a clear insight into all the essentials of this procedure other than perhaps the recognized process of hpaga substitution. Hertz (1) summarised the process thus:-

In all cases arbitration is first resorted to. The aggrieved party sends his kakas or deputies to lay his complaint before the family of the offender who call in a number of salangs or elders to discuss the matters with a view to arranging a settlement, failing which the case is referred to the arbitrator by one or more duwas and salangs of some other tribe. The decision of the arbitrator is generally accepted in minor cases, but if the disputants are dissatisfied with the award they are not obliged to accept it, and when this happens the law of reprisal is usually resorted to, both parties lifting cattle, raiding and counter-raiding till one tires of the game, when a balance is finally struck and the case is finally closed with the help of the salangs of their respective villages ..... No case is considered settled until the ceremony of nat hpung dun jaw ai or nat tu ya ai is performed. This consists of an offering to the nats by the defendant in the case and afterwards partaken by the parties at law together with their advisers and friends .... all this is supposed to drive out the marawng nat, the spirit of jealousy and hatred and to reconcile all parties.

It would appear however that the majority of later officers took less notice of this shrewd analysis than of another

1. H.F. Hertz (1) 152, 155.



comment by the same author.

but after all that can be said about Kachin law the fact remains that the law of might is the favourite law of the Kachin, who, if he feels himself stronger than the party with whom he is at dispute and able to outdo him in the matter of reprisals, often resorts to brute force to settle a case in a manner most agreeable and profitable to himself. (1)

The essence of the matter is that the British

Administration could not tolerate the element in the traditional procedure which made it a matter of choice on the part of the parties to the dispute whether or not the case should go to arbitration at all. From the Administration's point of view it was essential that the application of legal process should be obligatory. This in itself was a fundamental innovation, but one way and another British practice introduced several novel principles and changed the whole "function" of judicial procedure. The British interpreted Kachin law as being a law of compensation. The magistrate sitting with assessors was thus supposed to judge the case and decide whether in fact an offence had been committed; the native assessors were supposed to invoke native tradition to determine what compensation should be paid. The court further interested itself in seeing that the judgement award was in fact paid over in the form decided, but as a rule

did not concern itself as to whether or not any appropriate religious ceremonial had been carried out.

These old feuds appear to be interminable, and this is in great measure due to the fact that in early days orders were passed in such cases, but the officer who passed them had not time to see them carried out; the judgement debtor then went back to his village, the compensation ordered was not paid, and the feud pursued the even tenor of its way. The Deputy Commissioner has now directed Mr Nee in such cases to keep the debtor in custody until he does pay up, and there is some hope that by this means feuds will really be terminated.(1)

A pious hope indeed!

The effect of this is manifest. Firstly the lessened importance attached to the ritual element meant that the society as a whole was no longer concerned in the settlement. The whole business was now merely a direct transaction between the parties to the dispute and the British Government. Secondly the elders as assessors were now expected on the one hand to be impartial judges but on the other were expected to carry out the role formerly filled by the kasa of arriving at an agreed settlement. Thirdly the settlement was required to be settled in the same form as it was decided, - thus if the judgement included a 100 bead necklace of a particular kind, such a necklace would have to be



found even though it was well known that only two or three existed anywhere in the Kachin Hills.

The British magistrates naturally found the resulting delays and procrastinations exasperating beyond all words and were soon pressing the elders to introduce hpaga substitution of a new kind. The idea now was to set a cash value on every hpaga in the formal list and to make the final settlement a consolidated cash payment. (1) The administrative convenience of this device was enormous since it could be applied to Christians and non-Kachins as well as orthodox nat worshippers. Today, in the Sinpraw Area the "cash settlement" has almost completely superseded the traditional type of payment, and crime is now very cheap. The hpaga list for homicide by a commoner was computed at Rs 300 in 1897 and is still Rs 300 today though buffaloes, guns and ancient necklaces are worth many times their former rupee value. (2)

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1. Carrapiett (1) Appx.

2. Hertz H.F. (1) 154.

Present homicide scale in the Sinpraw is Commoner Rs 300/- na gam amyu chief Rs 300/- ; mayi sha ei gu Rs 1500/-. But this "native law and custom" only applies to accidents. Murder is punishable by death under the Indian Penal Code. The traditional scale made no distinction between murder and accidental homicide; the usual rate was 100 hpaga for a chief; 50 hpaga for a commoner; 25 hpaga for a slave (mayan).

It will be agreed I think that if my analysis is only partially correct, "native law and custom" has undergone a strange metamorphosis. It is quite arguable that in the eyes of the strict traditionalist practically none of the major cases settled by the Assistant Superintendents' courts during the past fifty years have in fact been settled at all! This is not merely an academic viewpoint. There are still many glowing embers from cases "settled" by the Government as much as 40 years ago. In some cases the Government Officers were merely ignorant of the implications of the ritual aspects of settlement; in others they were too busy to see that their judgement provided anything but a renewed source of grievance. But even those officers who fully understood the traditional system were not necessarily capable of adapting the Machin Hills Regulations to fit the traditional code. How for example would one settle a case of homicide in which one of the parties is a Christian and the other an "Animist", and yet adhere to the spirit as well as the letter of "native law and custom"?

#### The Case of the Maran-Atsi feud at Hpalang.

A case in point which well illustrates the administrator's dilemma is that of the celebrated Maran-Atsi feud at Hpalang, concerning which I did a good deal of first hand research. Unfortunately, as all my Hpalang records are lost, I can only



sketch the general features of the case, and in some instances in recollection I may have reversed the characters of the story. But roughly speaking the story was this. Three or four generations ago Hpalang ridge had been inhabited by Palaungs. Then an Atsi-Lahpai chief had established himself there. Some of the Palaungs had been driven away, but others had stayed on and lived under the Atsi, the Shans who cultivated the wet paddy land at the foot of the Hpalang ridge had also been ruled by the Atsi.

On the next ridge to the north the Chiefs were of the Jinghpaw Maran clan, the ruling lineages being N'mwe, Hpokawn, Gunje who were closely allied by marriage with certain N'Hkum lineages, whose chiefs had territory further north. The Atsi Chiefs for their part were closely allied with the Gauri-Lahpai chiefs to the west and also by marriage with the Lahtaw chiefs to the south west.

Local tradition asserted that the ensuing "war" arose from a purely local quarrel between the Atsi chiefs of Hpalang and their neighbours the N'mwe Maran. In a larger scale however this feud seems to have been merely a part of a general shift in the Kachin balance of power. As explained in the last Chapter the Gauri ascendancy in this area during the early part of the 19th Century can be directly attributed to the fact that they controlled the very lucrative tolls on the Burma-China trade caravans operating between Bhamo and

Tengyueh. The closing of this trade route by the Burmese as a matter of policy from about 1855 onwards, plus the general chaos introduced into Yunnan by the Penthay rebellion, deprived the Gauri chiefs of most of their revenue, and the once paramount Mahtang duwa began to lose status. From this point of view the opposition between the Maran-N'Ekum confederacy on the one hand and the Atai-Gauri group on the other - which seems to have been widespread in the Sinalun Hills was merely an expression of this shift in power. According to Hpalang tradition the Atai Chiefs called to their aid a long list of Gauri chiefs but not the duwa of Mahtang; similarly the N'Mwe summoned a long list of Maran and N'Ekum chiefs among whom was the Maran "duwa" of Lamaibang which is actually itself a satellite village of Mahtang. The whole thing was a tussle for power among the former adherents of the Mahtang Gauri chief.

In 1940, the rival parties at Hpalang had different versions of the origin of the dispute which by common consent started about 80 years ago. The Atais said that the wife of the N'Mwe chief had set panji (hardened bamboo spikes) in the edge of her yi clearing to ward off wild pig; and that a member of the Atai chief's family passing through the yi had trodden on the panji, poisoned his foot and died. Thus creating a debt (hka) against the N'Mwe.



The Maran version was far more dramatic. According to this, the son of the Atsi chief had cohabited with the N'Mwe chief's daughter and got her with child. The daughter had named the Atsi as the cause of her pregnancy and the N'Mwe had claimed a bastardy debt (sumrai hka). The Atsi Chief's son had hotly denied that he was in any way responsible and had rashly sworn an oath to the effect that "if the child indeed be mine, let it be born hairlipped." The worst possible disaster then befel; the girl died in childbirth. (1) The N'Mwe carried out a post-mortem and behold the unborn babe was hairlipped! The battle was on.

Whatever the rights and wrongs of the case, the Atsi chief must have been remarkably unpopular because a large body of his Atsi adherents, represented by the Sumnut village of today, changed sides and joined the Maran. Even so, it is claimed that the war lasted for many years. The rules were very polite. There was a close season to all hostilities from the outbreak of the rains until the harvest; and though numerous houses were burnt very few people seem to have been actually killed. All parties memorised a long and complicated tally sheet of the accumulation of debts incurred by both foes and allies. Thus the N'Hkum adherents of the Maran now have a debt against the Maran

1. N'dang si si. Thus causing an extremely serious "debt" against the man responsible.

for a long list of items which includes so far as I can remember two men and one slave, killed, two buffaloes sacrificed at the victory manau - somewhat prematurely, - a hundred viss of gunpowder, and so on.

All parties agree that the Atsi Chief was eventually expelled; the N'Mwe, Gumjye and N'Nkum Laga settled on Hpalang ridge along with the Sumnut and a victory manau was held to celebrate the victory. But, say the Atsis, the Atsi chief did not participate or send a contribution, so the case was not closed. The Sumnut headman was an Atsi of commoner blood, and soon quarrelled with his new Jinghpaw Maran overlords. The legend of the new quarrel duplicates and reverses the first one. The Sumnut stole the Maran's vattle; a Maran boy seduced a Sumnut girl, who died in childbirth.

The Sumnut now started a plot to bring the Atsi chief back again; and then, as an anticlimax, RI duwa (1) the British Government officer arrived, and heard the case and said that the Atsi Chief and the Maran chief should both rule in Hpalang; the Atsi chief should rule over the Sumnut and the N'Mwe chief over the rest.

This judgement of Solomon is historical and was

1. D.W.Rae Esq., first Assistant Superintendent Sialum.



duly recorded in the Administration Report for 1900. I may add that the Atsi chief shortly died and since then the Sumnut have always managed to persuade the Government that there are no males in that line, who are not idiots! There is still an Atsi Chief over the northern half of the Hpalang ridge. He is an idiot; his "village" consists of one house; a very convenient arrangement for the Sumnut headman next door, a go-ahead Christian, with many years service in the army, but a commoner by blood and thereby debarred from ever reaching chief's status officially.

Let us see how this surprising division of authority appeared to the British authorities at the time.

Up to 1898 the British left the Hpalang area severely alone as it was uncertain whether it fell within Chinese or Burmese territory. In 1897 the Anglo-Chinese boundary commission with Mr. Rae (Ri Duwa) as British representative fixed the boundary along the edge of what is now known as the Lweje Plain but was then known as the Mong Wan plain. The Mong Wan Sawbwa is described as a Shan-Chinese but seems to have been closely linked with the Mong Na people in the Taping Valley to the north. The Hpalang people today say that the boundary encroaches considerably on what was formerly recognised as Mong Wan territory. Their story of the boundary commission proceedings is picturesque.

1) R.N.E.F. 1898. paras 2, 4.

Ri Duwa and the Chinese duwa came to settle the boundary. Ri Duwa had a bag of earth and a bag of money and he said to the Chinese duwa "Do you want the earth or the money?" Every time this happened, the Chinese duwa took the bag of money and the boundary was moved further east. (1)

On the face of it certainly, it seems probable that prior to British intervention the people of the Hpalang area were much more under the influence of the Shans and Chinese of Mong Mao, Mong Wan and Tengyueh than they were of the Burmese across the mountains in Bhamo.

The agreed frontier left a fair part of the paddy plain in British territory.

The Shans who worked the land on our side of the boundary were allowed to register their claims and were informed that they would be allowed to continue to cultivate subject to such tax as we might subsequently impose .....

A number of families of Shans came over and have been accommodated with a village site on our side and given land to cultivate; they were afraid to do so before owing to the Kachins' exactions. We have started a bazaar on this side of the boundary which it is hoped will obviate the necessity of our Kachins going over to the trans-frontier bazaars where they often get into trouble. (2)

This bazaar is the modern Iweje which, up to 1940, had achieved a satisfactory monopoly of local market trade. The Hpalang Kachins agree that the paddy lands at the foot of their hill were not cultivated when the British came. They had formerly they say, been cultivated by Shans subject to

1. Story recorded 1940

2. R.N.E.F., 1899, para 8.



Arsi

the Atsi Chief but that when the latter was driven from Hpalang his Shan followers had fled. This is plausible enough since the Kachins who exercise a dominating influence over the affairs of Mong Mao State are mainly Atsi. Thus in the Maran-Atsi "war" the local Shans probably sided with the Atsi.

It seems not improbable that it was the fact that the Shan adherents of the Atsi were returning to their paddy lands under Government protection that decided the Atsi that it was time to stake a claim for Hpalang. The next year -

On the 6th December Mr. Rae left Bhamo for Sialum. At Lawtan he was met by the Sina tan ngok who reported that the Atsis of Hkoma, Hpakum, Sedon, and Panlum and the Keurries of Auregateung and South Hoton intended re-establishing the Atsi Duwa of Hpalang who had been turned out many years before by his villagers and the Marans by force. Orders were at once issued to the Duwas and elders of the villages named to keep the peace. On the 8th Mr Rae was joined by Mr Faunce, who took command of his escort which consisted of fifty men, and by the Deputy Commissioner, and they proceeded to Hpalang to settle the feud between the Atsis and the Marans... On the 17th January, assisted by Mr. Rae, the Deputy Commissioner held a thorough enquiry into the feud between the Marans of Hpalang and the Atsi duwa of Hpalang, which resulted in permission being granted to the Duwa to re-establish himself at Sumnutaung (Sumnut gahtawng), a purely Atsi village of the Hpalang group. At the same time a division was made of the paddy lands at the foot of the ridge, which owing to this feud had remained uncultivated for years. The Marans appear to be a bit dissatisfied just now over

this division, but in a few years time will forget all about it. It is a great thing to have got this famous feud finally settled as it has been smouldering for at least 20 years, preventing both Atais and Marans from cultivating freely and keeping them in an unsettled state, and it is noteworthy how readily both sides assented to the decision though most of them were new subjects of ours and neither party was very well satisfied.

(1)

The optimism of Government Officials knows no bounds!

The feud had of course in no sense been settled. True there have been no serious overt incidents of its recrudescence between 1898 and 1941 - what happened between 1942-45 I don't know - but the reason for this is obvious. There was a military police post five miles away at the bottom of the hill where the local taungok had his office. But every incident in the dispute had been carefully memorised, and no doubt amplified in the process. Clear evidence of this is the fact that to the best of my recollection there was only one extant case of a marriage between the Atai-Gauri-Lahpai group on the one hand and the Maran-N'Hkam group on the other, and this had been an elopement frowned on by both sides. Yet genealogies showed that two generations ago there were several marriages between the Sumnut and the Maran - an indication that there was some basis in the story that for a while the Sumnut became adherents of the Maran-N'Hkam.



Sociologically speaking it is difficult to conceive of any action which Government might have taken in 1898 which would be more certain to perpetuate the feud (and the basic community cleavage that it typified,) than that which they actually did take; namely to permit the truculent Sumnui to instal an independent puppet chief by which they might demonstrate their difference.

Yet note how this action links back to our original theme - the pseudo-ethnography that would make separate "races" out of every language group. The Administrator's justification in installing a separate Atsi duwa was that Sumnui gahawng was "a purely Atsi village in the Hpalang group" - ergo it is entitled to be treated as administratively separate. And then the Government is painfully surprised when these carefully fostered oppositions fail to resolve themselves in response to an edict from the Court House that the dispute is now finished!

This same "ethnological" basis for the policy of segregation constantly crops up in official records. Bernard for example, while admitting that Atsis and Marus might be found as adherents of Jinghpaw chiefs regarded such a situation with the deepest suspicion and as calling for clear cut administrative segregation.

The settlement of Atsis and Marus in Jinghpaw villages is made with the permission of the Duwa. The land is given either as a gift or as a dowry, or is purchased. This is a fruitful source of boundary disputes which require careful handling. The boundaries of the land are stated very sketchily and the evidence produced is generally hearsay and much time and trouble is required for a satisfactory division of the disputed land. Boundary disputes should be taken up as soon as possible as otherwise they lead to acts of violence. (1)

Yet it is arguable that the fixing of boundaries by Government perpetuates rather than removes sources of dispute. Under the British system every village headman has a certificate which defines the limits of his authority; he knows that Government will back up the letter of this document and he can therefore afford to be thoroughly obstinate and recalcitrant on all matters affecting these rights. Under pre-British conditions there was much more room for compromise; no one could hold out on an out of date land claim unless he had the support of public opinion.

Thus it was in Hpalang. Government took action which ensured that the disputing parties should remain permanently separate, then ever afterwards it was asserted that the cause of the separation was that the Atsis were in one camp and the Jinghpaw in the other.



The Government as Employer - the Army

In considering the effects on the Kachins of military service under the British Government I am again confronted with the difficulty noted at the beginning of this chapter, namely that the changes of the last five years have been both more violent in scale and perhaps more important in their consequences than the whole accumulation of events between 1890 and 1941.

Prior to 1941 there were perhaps at maximum 5,000 Kachins drawing military or military police pay. Most of these were on minimum rates and the total earnings cannot have exceeded Rs10,000 a month at the outside. <sup>(1)</sup> Only a fraction of this sum would be remitted home, and of this fraction an entirely negligible quantity would be destined for the heart of the Kachin area in the Hkakhku, since the great bulk of Kachin military recruitment was from the Singraw Area. Yet from January 1943 to December 1944 there was a monthly military payment into the Hkakhku area alone of not less than Rs100,000. At the time there were very few opportunities for spending this huge sum and the bulk of it was hoarded in hopes of better times to come. Thus at the

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1. I can find no official figures. There were four battalions of Burma Rifles (half of whose members were Kachin) and eight battalions of Burma Military Police of whose members possibly 1/6th were Kachin.

end of the war the average money wealth of the Kachins of the Hkabhku area was out of all proportion greater than anything previously experienced.

Clearly it is possible that the ultimate conversion of this accumulated wealth into capital and consumer goods may have very far reaching long term consequences for the economy of the whole area; on the other hand it is equally possible that most of the money may be frittered away by inflationary processes or even requisitioned by Government taxation, in which case the economic effects of the war either good or evil might be quickly dissipated.

For these reasons I intend to ignore all events since 1941; they are too near and too large scale to be observed in proper perspective. Moreover since I myself have not been in the Kachin Hills since early in 1944, I have no reliable information concerning the most recent developments.

Nevertheless even before the war, despite the relatively small scale of the sums involved there is no doubt that military service represented a very important balancing factor in the general economy. Besides which the army represented a most important instrument for the positive inculcation of Western ideas. Leave terms were generous, and every dry season a large number of soldiers returned to their homes for a three months' furlough taking with



them not only gifts in money and kind, but all sorts of novel ideas.

This acculturation process had a wide range. The first Kachin troops to see active service campaigned in Mesopotamia and Kurdistan in 1916, and in 1939 I met a veteran of this campaign who gave me a vivid description of Baghdad under the impression that he was describing Berlin! In later years a battalion of the Burma Army was regularly garrisoned at Kuala Lumpur in Malaya, and Kachin troops took their turn here as well. Even for those who did not see foreign service, joining the Army or the military police involved a great widening of the individual mental horizon. The ex-sepoy, however stupid, is more a man of the world than his stay at home neighbour. Yet the acculturation due to direct army influence was not so blatant as might have been expected. Only those who served for long periods and reached senior non-commissioned or commissioned rank (Havildar Major, Jemadar, Subedar) were likely to take on many of the airs and graces of Western or Burmese culture, and these when finally they left the army usually preferred to settle in the plains rather than return to the ancestral squalor in the hills.

But if long term service in the Army tended to this extent to turn the senior soldier into a pseudo-Burman the whole military set up was designed to foster rather than

remove the consciousness of racial difference between the various linguistic communities.

When the indigenous Burma Army was first formed at the end of the first World War it was conveniently found that the Burmese themselves made unsatisfactory soldiers. The army and military police - in so far as it was drawn from local and not Indian sources - was forged out of the hill tribes, Karens, Kachins, Chins. To the politically conscious Burman the implication of this was obvious enough. The hill tribesmen were being employed as a tool of British Imperialism to keep the Burman down. The troops on the other hand were constantly being encouraged to despise the alleged military inferiority of the Burman. (1)

Furthermore steps were taken which ensured the persistence of a sense of hostility and difference between the component elements within the army itself. The army was originally organised on a battalion class basis, - that is to say there was a Kachin battalion, a Karen battalion and so on. In view of the language difference this arrangement was logical and such rivalry as it promoted was healthy and competitive.

1. There is no justification whatever for the belief that the Burman is necessarily a poor soldier. Their 18th and early 19th Century record demonstrate this.



But the brasshats of Simla had a deepseated terror of "communalism". For fear that Mussalman and Sikh might one day find themselves in open opposition the great Punjabi military castes are recruited into the same regiments. Since both speak the same language, the procedure is logical enough in this way. But the same edict applied to the Burma Army was farcical. In the revised scheme each battalion consisted of two companies of Kachins, one of Karens and one of Chins. (1) English was the official military language, which all ranks were supposed to understand.

A more absurd system would be difficult to imagine. While under the class battalion system it was possible for the British officers to achieve a thorough understanding of the language and mentality of the men with whom they served; the later class company system might have been specially devised to create the maximum possible hostility and suspicion among all concerned. The pick of the jobs in any army battalion are those in the headquarter company, and in the class company system the various "tribal" classes were in effect competing for the "staff jobs"- appointments which rested, or at any rate appeared to rest, upon the

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1. This was the organisation immediately before the expansion due to the war i.e. as at 1938.

favouritism of the European officers. The astonishing thing to me was the way the various groups got on as well as they did in these trying circumstances.

An important result of army service was that the great majority of serving soldiers tended to become Christians, at any rate temporarily. The reason for this is easy to appreciate. The Army claimed to permit "freedom of religious worship". Kachin "animists", garrisoned at Maymyo, were even allotted a little patch of jungle where they might perform their rituals. But since, as we have seen, Kachin nai worship is an ancestor cult linked with a concept of territorial deities it is clearly quite impossible to carry out any ceremony at all when away from home among a mixed group of people who are non kinsfolk; besides which competent dumee priests do not as a rule join the army! The sing song Christianity of the American Baptist mission however flourishes under army conditions, and had too the virtue of breaking down to some extent the language class sectionalism fostered by the army set up.

While on this point of the Army impact upon traditional religion, the official attitude to the manau may be noticed. Government officers saw the manau as an alcoholic and spectacular banquet. They realised of course that it vaguely had something to do with the nats, but since it was



commonly asserted that the Kachins have no religion but only a lot of crude superstitions it probably never occurred to anyone that the "guying" of a manau might appear to a Kachin sacriligious! Throughout the hills, and also in the Army, it became customary on the occasion of the visit of any "big shot" such as a General, or a Governor, or a Chief Commissioner to stage an official "Government manau" so that the "big shot" in question should be able to take photographs and go home thinking that he had seen a primitive  
(1)  
orgy. Naturally the proceedings were highly bowdlerised and contained practically no element of the traditional, except the spectacular feature of the processional dance. These staged manaus took an entirely standardised form. The only religious element was some hymn singing by the local Christians! One animal was contributed by Government to feast the populace - but was killed offstage so as not to shock the visiting European ladies; alcohol was barred, and the proceedings were closed down at sunset so that there should be no rowdiness in Government precincts. Simlam Government Station even had a pair of "property" manau posts painted gaudy colours and kept out of season in

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1. I write from first hand experience of such a staged manau, but for obvious reasons must omit the name of the official concerned.

the P.W.D. store.

In the "real thing" these manau posts are extremely sacred and possess an elaborate and very complicated sexual symbolism. (1) they must stand in situ for a year after the manau and should then be removed with ritual ceremonial and (I think) destroyed.

It is clear that such "manau" as held by the Government and the Army can only serve to bring the traditional procedure into ridicule; thus what was intended in the first place as a light hearted method of showing visiting officials "the sights", became in itself a powerful instrument of acculturation. In the Sinalum Hills where the pseudo-manau is most frequently staged by Government, genuine manau of any kind is now very rarely seen. In the same way although the Army itself does not actively indulge in "anti-animist" propaganda, yet the whole setting of army life is such as to encourage doubt and contempt of traditional, homeland institutions.

One might enumerate many similar points but all would point in the same direction and we may sum up this

1. The Sinalum "property posts" were symbolically incorrect. This modification must have been purposely introduced by the man who made the posts in the first place as it is highly improbable that the Assistant Superintendent concerned appreciated the Freudian symbolism involved.
2. For a portrait description of these posts see Carrapiett (1) 59; for illustration see Hanson (iv) photograph.



section by saying that the most important long term consequences of military service were (up to 1941)

- a) the money wealth contributed to the Kachin community as a whole
- b) the stimulus of foreign ideas brought in by returning soldiers.
- c) the stimulus of antipathy against Burmans coupled with the tendency for the best educated senior soldiers virtually to become Burmans.
- d) the general stimulus of education. All sepoy learn to read and write in an elementary fashion.
- e) the stimulus towards Christianity
- f) and a final point of some importance, a changed attitude towards rank.

In the hills rank is hereditary; in the Army rank is by length of service and merit. The meanest commoner may rise to be a Subedar Major; the highest born wan du may get no further than being a sepoy. Such facts translated into the context of home affairs are revolutionary indeed.

#### The European as Employer - other aspects.

The Army is not the only institution through which the Government offers employment to Kachins; other Government departments are also involved, notably public Works (P.W.D.), and Forests. But I do not intend to consider these other agents of acculturation separately. The "impact" is of like kind even if different in degree. There is however

this contrast. The army employs Kachins outside the hills; it therefore removes mouths but it also removes able bodied labour and, in peacetime, only a small proportion of the soldier's wages return to the hills. Other Government departments mostly employ Kachins in the hills in the dry weather. In this case the whole of the Government expenditure represents income in the economic balance of the hill areas, while furthermore the labour is still available for work in the agricultural season.

Similarly commercial firms employing Kachins do not remove them from their homes for very long at a time. The most important of these commercial activities is forestry extraction in the teak forests.

In the years immediately before the war an important development was taking place in connection with the sugar (1) factory at Sahnaw south of Mogaung. Here not only was seasonal employment given to large numbers of Kachins, who travelled there from as far afield as the Maru tracts of Htawgaw, but large areas of cane were actually being grown by individual Kachin cultivators acting under European advice.

I was interested to discover that the Marip chiefs of the North Triangle had considerable financial interests in  
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 1. Destroyed by bombing in 1943/4



this cultivation. It appears that many of the original labourers taken on by the Sahmaw organisation were ex slaves from the Triangle who were settled in the Mogaung area after their forcible release in 1928. Since the release was in many cases merely formal these men called on their "masters" (or adopted fathers) for the capital necessary to start up cultivation.

This is a hearsay story but it fits in so well with my view that Kachin "slavery" is the analogue of the Chin tefa system that I have thought it worth quoting.

Other European enterprises in north Burma make little use of Kachin labour. The Bawdwin lead-silver mine at Mawta for example (Burma Corporation) operated before the war almost entirely on Indian and Chinese labour.

#### The Christian Missions.

What I have said here amounts to this. In the pre-British regime the hill communities and the plains communities were in constant social and economic relation one with another so that there was a constant process of mutual modification. At any one time the structural

differences between the societies of the two types of area could never be great. Under the British regime on the other hand action by the Administration has heightened these differences in two ways. On the one hand the political structure of the plains has been systematically westernised, so that Bhamo, for example, now has an elected municipal council, a member of Parliament, a Court of Assize - or its equivalent - and so on; on the other hand an attempt has been made to stabilise the political and economic organisation of the hill peoples in the status quo as at 1892. Naturally this latter aim has not been completely achieved but it has been partially achieved by resort to two administrative devices, firstly the segregation of Hills from Plains with a separate code of law for each, and secondly by special subsidies to hill peoples in the form of Army, Police and Public Works pay. This second device is a necessary corollary of the first though the form of the subsidy can of course vary. Thus as we have seen along the northern frontier of Assam the segregation policy is accompanied by outright cash subsidies to the hill peoples and the same policy applies to the



Tribal Areas of the North West Frontier.<sup>1</sup> (W.F. No. 17a.)

The effect of the Christian missions has likewise been to heighten the sense of cultural difference between hills and plains communities.

I have already adduced a good deal of miscellaneous evidence to indicate that, provided there is no interference by third parties, hill "animists" in the fringe of the plains areas tend to adopt the religion of the more sophisticated peoples of the plains. This is a necessary condition for political unity and, on the assumption that the most sensible political destiny for the hill peoples of North Burma is that they should become a part of the Burmese nation, their religious destiny should be that they become Burmese Buddhists. Instead, the intelligentsia of the hill peoples are now almost entirely Christians.

The long range political implications of this are extremely serious. As we have seen, it is easy enough to hold the tenets of nat worship and of Buddhism at the same time, but it is not possible to be simultaneously a Buddhist and a Christian. The Christianisation of the educated politically conscious section of Kachin society thus represents a very serious obstacle to long term political assimilation into the Burmese body politic.

The activities of the Christian missions among the Kachins

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1. Cf. Future of the Pathan. "The Times", November 21st 1946.

present a number of features which are relevant to the theme of this book and it is worth considering some of these in detail.

Good or bad, the Kachins have had a surfeit of missions. A Mr. Bronson of the American Baptist Mission reached Sadiya in Assam in 1837 en route for China! "But God kept him back" and he started missionising among the Singpho. However, finding the political climate rather lively he retired to the more peaceful climate of Jaipur.<sup>1</sup>

Another American Baptist, a Mr. Kincaid, appears to have reached Mogaung in 1836 from Ava, but he was captured by Burmese bandits and failed to set up any mission.<sup>2</sup>

Roman Catholics first reached the Kachin Hills about 1856. The celebrated Bishop Bigandet, Bishop of Mandalay and author of "The Life of Gaudama" visited Bhamo about this date and made a preliminary study of the Kachins some account of which appeared in the Rangoon daily press at the time.<sup>3</sup> By 1874 the Catholics had a priest permanently stationed at Bhamo.<sup>4</sup>

The American Baptists came into the field again in 1873 when Dr Mason visited Bhamo in search of early traces of the Karens.<sup>5</sup> The permanent A.B.M. station seems to have been

1. American Baptist Mission (1)
2. Bayfield (1) 208/9, 231/2 Bayfield says Kincaid was killed. This is incorrect as he lived to write a report of his tour which I have not traced.
3. Anderson (11) Preface iv
4. Stretton (1) 86
5. See Chapter 2



established by Cushing in 1875. By 1880 the station had two Europeans (Freiday and Roberts) and several Karen native teachers.

The China Inland Mission had a station in Bhamo from 1876 to 1881 and again for a few years before 1900 but it worked among local Chinese rather than Kachins, and appears to have had practically no converts.<sup>6</sup>

Both the Catholics and the Baptists consolidated themselves in the Bhamo area soon after the British annexation of 1885. By 1900 the American Baptists (A.B.M.) had mission stations at Bhamo, Myitkyina, Mamkam and Kutkai in Burma and at Sadiya in Assam. In 1940 these were still the main centres of A.B.M. activity but there was an outstation at Sumprabum in the Hkahku area also staffed by Europeans. In addition to these main centres with their European (American) staffs, there were a large number of village schools in the hills manned by native "pastors" and teachers.

The Catholics were at first represented by French Fathers whose activities were restricted through lack of finance. Their main centre was at Bhamo with several outstations in the Binlum Hills, the most notable being that organised by Fr. Gilhodes at Prang Hudung close to the old Northern Gauri "capital" of Mantang to which reference has previously been made.

The French Fathers were replaced by Irish Fathers about

6. "China's Millions" various refs.

1937, and these latter somewhat expanded the scope of the mission's activities. Their most important innovation was to establish two priests in the Triangle at Kajintu.

In 1924 yet a third mission entered the Kachin Field. The Bible Churchman's Missionary Society (B.C.M.S), an extreme evangelical organisation under Church of England auspices, has so far confined itself to the Htingnan areas. A.T.Houghton, their first missionary, appears at one time to have been a British Army private stationed at Maymyo where he encountered Kachin troops badly in need of salvation.<sup>1</sup> Up to 1941 B.C.M.S. headquarters was at Mohnyin in the Railway Corridor with outstations at Kamaing and at Mainghkwan in the Hukawng. Whatever may be thought of their Bible punching methods of evangelism, one can have nothing but admiration for their efforts in the medical field.

Several other missions both Catholic and Protestant operate on the China side of the Burma-China frontier. An evangelical mission from the Upper Salween valley has lately extended its activities westward into the Nam Tamai working chiefly among the Lisu.

Further south on the Chinese side of the Sinpraw area there are Catholic Fathers of several nationalities who partially co-ordinate their efforts with the Catholic Fathers in Burma.

The activities of these several missions vary somewhat and

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1. Denyer (1), 79.



it is worth considering the most important ones separately, but certain remarks apply to all.

From the Administration's point of view the most important role of the mission is education. Although there have been from the beginning one or two purely Government Kachin schools the bulk of Kachin education, especially in the junior grades, is in the hands of the missions. All schools are supposed to adhere to an officially authorised curriculum and there is Government inspection to ensure maintenance of the correct standards. While the running of the schools is left to the missions, they are subsidised by various forms of grant.<sup>1</sup> In effect, the Government, while recognising its responsibility to provide education, partly shelves that responsibility by sharing the financial liability with the missions; in return the missions are allowed a free hand in religious education. Thus although the Government professes not to interfere with traditional religious practices, it still says in effect "if you want your child to be educated, he or she must go to a mission school".

The official educational curriculum is a useful and practical one, with an initial stress on "the three R's", gardening and native handicrafts. Since Kachin is a language without a literature it is easy to exaggerate the usefulness of literacy, and accusations are sometimes made that the

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1. This was the position up to 1941.  
It may well have changed since.

system serves no purpose except to create an unemployed corps of clerks. But this is certainly not the view of the Kachins themselves, and their greatest anxiety is always for more and more schools.

Now let us consider each mission in turn.

### The American Baptist Mission (A.B.M.)

The strength and particular advantage of the A.B.M. in comparison with its competitors is, in the first place, economic. The A.B.M. missionary is better paid and better housed and thereby acquires greater prestige; his converts also receive more concrete economic advantages. A bright student for example has far more higher educational facilities open to him if he starts in the A.B.M. than if he is a Catholic. Besides which the A.B.M. creed has, as its background, what its adherents tend to describe as "the American way of life", which implies strong encouragement to the individual to better himself at the expense of the community at large. The A.B.M. ideal is to turn the best of the Kachins into enterprising capitalists. In a number of cases they have been strikingly successful.

In numbers the European (American) missionaries are only sufficient to provide a small staff at each of the main mission stations already listed. Their role is supervisory. There is no intention that they should be personally in charge of native church congregations. On the contrary,



the aim is to build up a self governing self perpetuating Kachin Christian Church. The A.B.M. village churches in the hills - (nawku jawng - praying schools) - are in charge of native "pastors",<sup>1</sup> who are deemed to have been thoroughly indoctrinated into the precepts of A.B.M. christianity. These men have mostly received their training in South Burma. Their educational qualifications are not, in most cases, of a very high order, but they have a veneer of Burmese sophistication; their wives wear Burmese dress, their children drink tinned milk, their houses are built to a Burmese design.

Individually they are extremely important agents in the general disruption of the traditional system. By birth they are often of low class status and, in any case, probably do not belong to the kinship system of the people among whom they are domiciled as religious teachers; yet their position is one of great political power. In many types of "uplift campaign" Government tends to address itself to the school teachers and pastors rather than to the traditional chiefs; as a result, the common people come to think that the leaders of the A.B.M. church are much closer to the Government than

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1. The School Teacher and the Pastor are sometimes one and the same. The School Teacher however must have qualifications which satisfy Government; whereas the Pastor need not. Usually there is a resident teacher at each school and a touring Pastor shared by several schools. Both "Pastors" and "Teachers" are of a similar semi-sophisticated type.

are the traditional leaders, and a new alignment of authority is built up.

A further complication is introduced through the fact that while the Kachins as a whole are surprisingly - and sometimes passionately - "pro-British", the A.B.M. teachers with their South Burma educational background are suspicious of, if not frankly antagonistic to, "British Imperialism". It was highly significant, though not at all surprising, that during the 1942-45 period the only Kachins who came out wholeheartedly and enthusiastically on the Japanese side were elders and teachers of the A.B.M. church.

Like all protestant evangelical sects the A.B.M. set high value on the specific religious efficacy of the Biblical word per se, and one of their first important actions was to set about the translation of the Bible into Jinghpaw. An A.B.M. missionary in 1940 told me frankly that the only reason why his mission set high importance upon teaching children to read was to enable them to read the Bible!

As we have seen in previous Chapters there was, prior to the coming of the missionaries, no written form of Jinghpaw. Jinghpaw chiefs sent communications to one another in Shan or else by means of symbolic gifts, the meaning of which was well understood. It is greatly to the credit of the early A.B.M. missionaries, notably Hanson, that they devised a



satisfactory system for expressing Jinghpaw in the Roman alphabet. Spelling is still not completely standardised but Jinghpaw speaking Kachins from all parts of the hills can now easily understand the same written texts.

On the debit side these same early missionaries standardised an unpleasantly ornate form of Jinghpaw as "good style" in written Kachin. It is arguable of course whether this was entirely the missionaries' fault. All the neighbouring oriental countries have their affected ornate "court languages" which are remote from colloquial speech, but from the viewpoint of general efficiency it is a regrettable affectation to imitate. In an earlier chapter I mentioned the existence of special archaic forms of Jinghpaw, - dumsa ga used for ritual purposes, and jaiwa ga used for the traditional saga. These forms of the language achieve their effect through the mythic intonation in which they are delivered, many of the individual "words" torn from their context being almost meaningless. Hanson was much impressed by the luxuriance of this jargon and his Bible is full of terms culled from the ritual language. While not out of place in a Gospel reading or a hymn these frills are just a nuisance in practical letter writing. As a result "good style" written Jinghpaw already deviates a long way from any form of the colloquial speech and this must certainly be attributed to action by the mission schools.

The stylistic efflorescence has one suspects been carried over into the religion itself. I have a good deal of first hand evidence that many of those who attend an A.B.M. religious service and listen to a Bible reading do not understand more than a few words of the latter, it is all a gumbo-jumberry to be suitably intoned, just as the traditional dumga ga was intoned, with only slight comprehension of any precise meanings.

In the nett result it seems to me that A.B.M. Christianity has already deviated a very long way from Christianity as understood by Europeans. In the main mission stations, of course, where the procedure is supervised by Europeans, the intended pattern prevails, but in the outlying localities visited perhaps only once or twice in a year by touring missionaries, the procedure has become a ritual qui generis. There is little doubt in my own mind that, if for any reason the financial support from outside sources were withdrawn, the A.B.M. Kachin church would very rapidly assume an entirely unrecognisable form or forms, though those forms would not necessarily have any marked resemblance to traditional "animism".<sup>1</sup>

In its present form its most marked overt characteristics

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1. In the Kachin Hills there is, so far, no frankly independent native Church comparable to the Pau Chin Han cult in the Chin Hills.



are vigorous hymn singing and an unnecessary profusion of taboos, - no alcohol, no tobacco, no blood sacrifices, no bride price.<sup>2</sup> For the go-ahead progressive individual it offers many advantages quite apart from the initial spur of education. An enterprising young man freed from the obligation to distribute his wealth among his fellow villagers through the medium of sundry nat ceremonials quickly establishes an advantage over those who adhere to the traditional ways. Besides which, since all political obligations and dues can be interpreted as part of the heathen religious scheme, a man of low rank status can escape all his obligations. It is noticeable that in nearly all villages the first converts are persons of commoner or mayan status; similarly as a rule the full blooded "thigh eating chiefs" stay on as "animists" to the bitter end. In the rare instances where this latter generalisation has not held good the economic advantages to the Chief who is also an early convert have been very marked indeed.

Some examples may be quoted. Until 1940 there was no mission station actually forming any part of the Hpalang

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2. A.B.M. Church members do in fact pay bride price but on a greatly reduced scale, thus upsetting the general balance in the circulation of ritual objects.

village cluster itself but there was an A.B.M. school a mile or so away on one side and a Roman Catholic school about five miles away on the other. In the Maran half of the community the only Christians were one or two quite unimportant households of myam status; but in the Atsi half of the community the arrogant progressive (and commoner) Sumnut headman as well as most of his immediate relatives were all Christians (A.B.M.). Another lineage group in the same village, who, though related to the Sumnut by marriage, had a long standing quarrel with the headman, were also Christians (Roman Catholic). The idiot Atsi-Lahpai duwa, who was merely a puppet of the Sumnut headman, remained an animist, - presumably so that he could carry out the appropriate nunghang rituals.

Similarly at Sinlunkaba, close to the Civil Administration Centre at Sinlum, there has long been a Roman Catholic Mission School. The whole locality is subjected to much sophisticating influence and, as one might expect, there are few animists remaining. One of the few is the Gauri chief of the place.

Not far away lives another Gauri chief a lineage brother of the one just mentioned. An enterprising individual he was an early convert to A.B.M. christianity. He exploited his position to obtain the maximum possible benefit for his

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1. Under the amalgamated scheme in progress in 1939/40 this school and its associated Christian village was to become a part of Hpalang.



immediate family and other close relatives with quite astonishing effect. I believe I am correct in saying that three of the first four Kachin to achieve University graduate status were the sons of this man, and I should say that, at a rough estimate, 50% of all Kachins in positions of administrative authority throughout the Kachin hills are his fairly close relatives.

The quite disproportionate influence in Kachin affairs now exercised by various members of the Gauri group is due to the fact that it was in their area that both the A.D.M. and Catholic missions first established schools, but the grouping of the actual individuals who have benefitted most by this circumstance is connected with kinship factors in the original pre-existing structure. Thus members of the Gauri ma gam amyu Kawlu lineage have in two generations produced three taungoks, one Subedar, two Jemadars, as well as a large number of minor government employees.

#### The Roman Catholic Mission (R.C.)

The basic dogmas of the Catholic church lead to a somewhat different type of missionary activity. Direct supervision of religious activity is always in the hands of an ordained priest. So far as I know there are no ordained Kachins, so that in consequence each individual mission station in the hills had its own European priest in charge.

Accordingly there was no such deviation from recognised Christian forms as occurs in A.B.M. churches looked after by native pastors.

The Catholic missionaries are much less impatient for results than are their A.B.M. opposite numbers and endeavour to graft Christianity onto the existing religious forms rather than to label the whole traditional set up as evil superstition. Since, on this account, Catholicism is less damaging to the existing social order than A.B.M. protestantism, it has not the same economic advantages to unscrupulous individuals; the numbers of its converts have therefore been on the whole somewhat meagre compared with the A.B.M. On the other hand it must be remembered that a Catholic convert is a Christian in a fairly genuine sense; an A.B.M. convert may know nothing of the Christian faith beyond some very fourth hand dogmas picked up in school class.

Yet even more than the A.B.M., the survival of the Kachin Catholic Church is dependent upon the continued presence of European missionaries. What are the prospects of British Administration were to be wholly withdrawn from Burma? Accurate prediction is clearly impossible; the history of Christianity in China shows that missions, and especially Catholic missions, may have a remarkable survival value even in the most adverse circumstances. The mere fact that Christianity in the Kachin hills seems out of place does not



mean by any means that it will not survive.

### The Bible Churchman's Mission (B.C.M.S.)

As I have indicated this is a relative newcomer to the field, and one with which I have no personal acquaintance. On the religious side it appears to represent an evangelical Bible punching creed of a much less practical variety than the A.B.M. Whereas the latter have from time to time shown considerable interest in Agricultural "uplift", improvements in sanitation and so on, one gets the impression that the B.C.M.S. rely entirely upon the wonderful power of the word of God. Nevertheless both at their main centre in the Railway Corridor and also at their outstation in the Mawkang Valley they set up very efficient hospitals. As a long range influence, this mission, in its present stage of development, cannot be considered as very important for the Kachins as a whole.

### "Burmanisation" or "Europeanisation"?

It is impossible to close this brief review of Christian missionary activity among the Kachins without considering the significance of the Harper Memorial Hospital at Mawhkan which owes its existing to the extraordinary zeal of Dr Gordon Seagrave. Seagrave and his Nurses received a good deal of publicity during the war, much of it rather unfortunate, but there is an aspect of the matter which concerns the theme of this book. Seagrave's hospital started as an offshoot of the

A.B.M. mission and his staff were all "christians". By "race" they were Karen, Shan and Kachin, by culture they were "European hospital nurses" drilled to an outstanding pitch of disciplined efficiency; in many respects they were "detribalised" in the sense that they were strangers to their own people, many of them hoped to marry Europeans, - and some of them succeeded. Yet what struck me about them was that while they were very far from being typical Kachins, or Shans or Karens they were all fairly close to being typical Burmese! The implication seems to be that the overt observable differences between any of these groups are very superficial; during the period of the British regime differences have been heightened by the fact that while the sophistication of what is deemed to be the typical Burman has been greatly stimulated, the sophistication of the "hill tribes" has been systematically delayed in the interests of "the preservation of native law and custom". Yet if a mixed selection of hill people are, as it were, given a special dose of sophistication under conditions in which their special cultural differences are not emphasised, then their close adherence to the normal Burmese pattern is immediately brought out.

Similar characteristics are observable in the features of sophistication taken on by such types as A.B.M. pastors, Government Office clerks and so on. They tend to become not so much imitation Europeans as imitation Burmese. Very



commonly both men and women of the sophisticated class adopt Burmese dress; if elements of European dress such as solar topees are also sometimes adopted they are only such features as are commonly imitated by the Burmese themselves. The interior furnishing of the house of a sophisticated Kachin of this type are typically Burmese as also in most cases are the meals he eats. It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the professed antipathy to everything Burmese, - an attitude now very commonly manifested by the politically conscious Kachin, is an extremely superficial sentiment. It will doubtless survive and flourish so long as there is a British authority to be leant against for protection or so long as the economic backing of Christian missions is available, but if for any reason the direct European influence were to be withdrawn this particular minority problem would not, in my opinion, last very long.

#### The Missions and the Government as agents of positive cultural change.

In an earlier chapter I drew the distinction between positive forms of externally induced change which hastened or emphasized trends towards change already latent in the inherent situation, and negative forms which served to hinder or reverse trends in the inherent situation.

In the foregoing sections of this chapter I have stressed particularly the negative aspects of European intervention.

There are however other aspects of European influence which are positive.

From this viewpoint education - the most direct of all forms of externally induced change - has both positive and negative aspects. It is positive insofar as the educated Kachin is brought intellectually nearer to his Burman neighbours than he might otherwise be, but negative wherever education is used to stimulate the sense of difference between "Kachins" and others. For example I believe there are cases where English is taught as a second language in preference to Burmese. This is a clear cut example of negative imposed change.

In the same way the general propaganda of officials often has an ambivalent quality about it. Sometimes this seems to be due to the too successful arguments of ethnologists in favour of the "protection of primitive cultures". The following quotation from Stevenson's recent pamphlet is an excellent example of muddled thinking on this score:

If the hill tribes of Burma are to develop in a way which will be to their benefit and which will give to Burma that priceless boon, a prosperous hinterland in which available public funds can be devoted to progress instead of to the maintenance of great armies of suppression and defence, the dangers of detribalisation and over-rapid assimilation of the wrong types of foreign culture must be avoided at all costs. In this connection it is important to remember that the cultures of the Burmese, the Indian and the Chinese are just as foreign to these hill peoples as the cultures of the west.



Anyone who has followed the argument of this book must I think agree that, by any conceivable definition of Culture, the last sentence of the above quotation is in straight defiance of the facts. Moreover all the evidence seems to show that "the great armies of suppression and defence" come into being through an effort to prevent intertribal assimilation rather than the other way about. If it be permissible at all to speak of the "wrong types of foreign culture" in such a context, almost all the "wrong types" in question seem to be of European rather than Asiatic origin.

The ambiguity of the Europeans approach arises I think from the fact that, while he is dimly aware that he himself is the most socially disruptive element in the whole situation, yet by and large he has humane intentions and would like to better the economic status of the people.

As a consequence of this, various palliative schemes have been put forward from time to time both by administrators and missionaries all of which are designed to develop a more effective use of local economic resources. Reading through the pages of the Annual Administration Reports it is depressing to notice how often schemes which in 1939 were being enthusiastically canvassed as revolutionary novelties had in fact been advocated - and even put into force 30 to 40 years before!

These uplift schemes take a variety of forms. Schemes

for developing dry weather food crops - potatoes, wheat, beans; schemes for developing cash crops - coffee, tea, tung oil, European fruits; schemes for improving the diet by persuading the Kachins to drink milk and introducing milch kine into their cattle stock; schemes for improving the quality of existing livestock such as pigs, chickens, and buffaloes; schemes for amalgamating villages - a double edged one this for as we saw in an earlier chapter the economic advantages of large villages are to say the least dubious though the administrative advantages are considerable. All of them are palliative in the sense that they avoid the basic issue:- more rice. "More rice" implies greater contact with the plains, and all these reformers were trying to persuade themselves, against their better judgment, that the hills could be developed as a self sufficient and separate community.

Not all these "stunts" have been a complete failure, though none of them have achieved the spectacular success of potato cultivation in the Garo and Khasi hills in Assam. On the whole the results of 50 years of uplift can only be described as depressing.

In his younger days Fr Gilhodes started a coffee plantation at Prang Hudung. It is excellent coffee, the finest in Burma, and very profitable to the Kachins who grow it but it has not caught on on other parts of the hills.



At least three times since 1900 Government have launched schemes for developing mule breeding in the Sinlun hills to break the Chinese monopoly; but though mules have been successfully bred, the scheme has collapsed each time that direct Government support has lapsed. One could cite dozens of similar instances.

Is it mere perversity or obstinate conservatism that develops resistance to these "obvious improvements"? Many exasperated missionaries and Government officials would answer yes, but the sociologists answer would be that the problem of economic betterment has never been considered as a whole but only in bits and pieces. All over the Kachin hills the basic economic cycle is the rice year. All social activities including such matters as housebuilding, getting married, trading, earning some spare cash in the plains and so on have to be fitted into this basic rice cycle. Many government officers and missionaries, (who do most of their touring in the dry season) come across more of what may be classed as leisure activities than of hard labour activities and therefore come away with the impression that the Kachin has a lot of spare time on his hands. Uplift schemes are therefore thoughtfully designed to take place in the dry weather as spare time occupations which will add to economic wealth without interfering with the rice cycle. What is not

realised is that the leisure activities of the dry season are just as essential to the social order as are the hard labour activities of the wet (rice growing) season. Direct criticism of official policy is no part of my theme; all I would stress here is that the Government palliative schemes for economic uplift have all come to grief because they are in the sense I have defined negative. They involve action against the normal stream of development which is always towards closer integration with the political economy of the plains.

Government has unlimited powers and, if it chooses, it can, as a matter of policy, impose changes of a negative type and force any particular hill area to be economically independent of its adjacent plains. But to achieve such change would involve a truly drastic and fundamental alteration of the existing social system, not merely a palliative adjustment.

Nevertheless despite the European's prejudices in favour of segregation and isolation, and hence of negative forms of change, some types of European induced change are of a positive kind.

Technological changes are usually of this kind whether or not that is the intention of the European innovator. Europeans, as administrators of missionaries, are constantly trying to "improve" what they consider to be the "primitive" techniques of Kachins, even when such techniques are very well adapted to local conditions. The missionaries and Government



officers, when they seek to "improve" these techniques, as a rule introduce themes from the Shan States or Burma proper and in this sense the changes introduced are "positive", - they bring the Kachins of the hills closer to their neighbours of the plains instead of holding them apart. Aesthetically the results may be deplorable.

Here is an example. The Kachin weaves on an Indonesian belt loom; the Shan has a treadle operated frame loom with a "sleigh" in place of the "sword" or "beater in".<sup>1</sup> The Shan apparatus weaves cloth several times faster than the Kachin loom. The same patterns can be (and are) woven on both looms but for technological reasons it is impossible to imitate on the Shan loom the tight "tapestry" texture that can be achieved on the Kachin loom. Aesthetically therefore the skirts and bags made by the women of the Sinlun Hills are immensely superior to the superficially similar objects made by their Shan sisters in the plains.

The Catholic missionaries at Prang Hudung include weaving among their educational facilities. In 1940 the craft was taught by a nun from south Italy. She was very proud of the fact that she had introduced a number of Burmese and European patterns in addition to the "stereotyped" Kachin traditional designs. What was aesthetically more serious was that the craft, as she taught it, was not the fine texture method of

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1. Other intermediate forms of loom also occur.

the traditional Kachin weaver, but the more rapid loose texture technique originally developed for the Shan frame loom.

Yet this change may be regarded as normal and "positive". In Putao in 1943 I came across an identical modification of Kachin technique taken over directly from the local Shans without any missionary intervention. The explanation given was probably the correct one. The Shan technique was quicker and people didn't have as much time on their hands as of old.

Here is another example of the European being an agent for a type of change that must occur anyway with or without external intervention.

In Chapter III I stressed the role of the jaiwa - the saga teller - in maintaining the large scale links in Kachin political structure. I mentioned that the effects of the decay in jaiwa learning were masked by the rigidity imposed on the existing system by British intervention. In the same way the rituals of the "animist" religious scheme are perpetuated through the learning of the highest grade of priest (dunna). The language of the priest rituals and the traditional sagas is of a semi-secret archaic kind. The spells and stories concerned are framed in long winded traditional poetry and the learning of the appropriate jargon is a laborious process. Formerly the apprentice pupil paid



his teacher a considerable sum (in rupia) and worked on acquiring the secret lore for many years before becoming fully qualified. This was a good economic investment for in after life the fees of a good lajin or guma would be considerable. But today there are other easier ways of making a living, and few young men can be induced to tackle the ancient learning.

The traditional Kachin nat worship is therefore in decay in any case through simple economic causes. The fact that the missionaries through direct propaganda, and the Army and the Government through indirect propaganda bring the old religion into disrepute merely accelerates a normal "positive" process. Where the activities of the missionaries are negative in this context is that they attempt to set up in place of the decaying nat worship some form of Christianity, - a religion which sociologically and politically is wholly out of place. The normal positive change for the Kachins as for the other hill peoples of Burma is to become Buddhist.

Thus even the most "disruptive" of all effects of western culture contact - the destruction of traditional religion - is not necessarily a total innovation. Social process is never a simple matter of cause and effect; motivations are always many, and the results complex. I suggest that it is seldom possible to isolate from these complex results the unique features that are solely due to European intervention.

CHAPTER XI.ConclusionDefects of Historical Material

The purely theoretical implications of the material that has been considered in this book were reviewed in some detail in my introductory Chapter.

In this final Chapter I shall merely fill in certain gaps in this original theoretical discussion and point out the more practical (i.e. political) implications of the study.

Methodologically I have been unable to avoid a number of serious defects. Though these are well known, they may well be mentioned once more.

Malinowski used to argue that all that was wrong with the historical approach was that the historical evidence did not exist in sufficient detail for any observer to make satisfactory unambiguous inferences. With only slender historical data to go on the research worker can nearly always find what he sets out to look for.

This criticism certainly applies to the material of this book. It provides an interpretation of a set of recorded facts. It is quite possible that other interpretations might fit the data equally well. Nevertheless if we are to study



change at all we must review data in historical perspective. The synchronic view, however detailed can never indicate with any certainty the course of future development; the diachronic view even if lacking in detail at least demonstrates some of the things that have not happened! I do not apologise therefore for basing an elaborate theory on inadequate historical data.

The opposite criticism would be that my account has a purely antiquarian interest. It is based upon events that occurred between 1825 and 1900; what relevance has such a discussion to the situation of 1946? I will consider this point in a moment. First there is another methodological issue to be considered.

The intention all through has been to study a changing situation freed from the complicating factor of European intrusion. It is important to recognise that at no point has this intention been achieved. Not only have I been wholly dependent upon the observations of Europeans to provide me with evidence, but the evidence itself goes to show that the intrusion of "European culture" in many of its ramifications was from the first an active force of cultural modification far in advance of the personal "contacts" of individual Europeans.

The first European to visit the Hukawng Valley was Hannay in 1835. He found European textiles on open sale in Mainghkwan hundreds of miles from any European trading post and found

nothing at all unusual in this circumstance.<sup>1</sup> Even in 1825, sixty years or more before they became a recognised part of the British Empire the Kachins and Chins were well equipped with firearms. It has been cogently argued<sup>2</sup> that the acquisition of these arms had drastic effects upon the social structure of the peoples concerned and of their relations with their neighbours. Are these guns to be regarded as a symptom of direct "culture contact" with the West? Some of the guns certainly were of western manufacture, but at this early stage the majority of them had been acquired through the Burmese.

One can argue then that even at this zero point of observation the hill peoples were already a part of the general world Economy, even though there were as yet no direct contacts with Europeans as persons. In this respect therefore one should draw a distinction between the type of material discussed in this book and data from let us say New Guinea, where it can be legitimately argued that historical records go back to a period when the local economy was fully divorced from the general world Economy. On the other hand early records from North Burma may be comparable to those of West Africa, and thus have relevance to the type of analysis presented by Fortes for the Tallensi. Bearing in mind that the King of Benin had an Ambassador at the Court of the King of Portugal as early as 1486,<sup>3</sup> as well as the

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1 Chapter VI.

2 Stevenson, v, 2.

3 Bouchard J. (1)



general history of the slave trade up to the beginning of the 19th Century, it is difficult to believe that the society of the peoples of the Volta basin can have possessed, as an historical fact, the long term stability and total freedom from European influence which seems to be implied by Fortes analysis. I am compelled therefore to wonder whether that apparent stability is not derived as much from the structuralists methodological approach as from the intrinsic qualities of the actual evidence.<sup>1</sup>

#### Political Implications of Anthropological Theory

Let us consider now whether, despite its antiquarian content, the material presented here has relevance in the present situation in North Burma.

One thing at least is clear. The practical administrators of the 1890 period were strongly influenced by the ethnological theories of their day. No-one would have thought of setting up a separate administration for the Kachin Hills unless it had been supposed that the difference in language represented a fundamental and "natural" division in the total body politic. Elliot and George<sup>2</sup> whose reports form the basis of the Kachin

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1. Fortes (i) & (ii) These two quoted references do not appear to me mutually consistent. The structural equilibrium of the latter seems at variance with the facts of the former.

2. See Bibliography.

Hills Regulations of 1898 (which are still generally speaking operative) were themselves shrewd ethnographical observers, and it is clear that they considered that their ethnography had practical applications in the field of administration. But if it is true that in 1890 the mode of anthropological theory had an effect upon colonial administrative policy, how much more so is that the case to-day! This fact has to be faced. From personal inclination I am sceptical about the direct applicability of anthropological findings to the problems of administration, but whether he likes it or not the anthropologist is likely to find that the general format of his theories, (if not the detail of the theories themselves), is likely to have a marked influence on the general ideology of administrative policy. If, in the Burma field, anthropological opinion was unanimous in holding that the various supposedly discrete social groupings Burmese, Shans, Kachins, Karens, Chins and so on are in fact not discrete at all, then I have no doubt that administrative policy would come to be adjusted to this intellectual climate. If this occurred it would have very important implications for all the peoples concerned. Thus even if the facts of this book are remote from present day realities, it is not necessarily true that the underlying theory is equally remote.

I am fully aware that the Kachins of 1947 have travelled a very long way since 1900; so have their Shan neighbours, and



the two groups have not always travelled in the same direction. Proof that in 1874 the Shans and Kachins in Mogaung were amicably integrated into a single society, is of no help to the administrator faced with the fact that Shans and Kachins in that area today cannot stand the sight of each other. But this very fact is of sociological interest; it demonstrates one of the major weaknesses in the species of "paternal" administration that has been generally characteristic of both British and Dutch colonial policy throughout S.E. Asia.<sup>1</sup>

The Colonial Power establishes law and order by direct intervention, military and economic. But by removing economic stress, it removes from the structure of society the motivation for normal social growth. The structure of the administered society, though functionally emasculated, often remains in its formal aspects remarkably stable, much more so perhaps than it might have done if there had been no Administering Power. Because of this lack of growth, the administered society becomes more and more out of step with the world at large, so that the foreign administration becomes ultimately indispensable. That is the position in Burma today.

For fifty years Burma Proper has been developing in outward form into a "western" style state; during the same period there has been no formal political development in the Kachin Hills at all. Although a fair number of Kachins have received a smatter-

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1. Cf. Kennedy (1) & (11) p.323

ing of education, and a small minority have been well educated, the political structure of the Kachin Hills in 1942 was still represented by the Kachin Hills Regulations of 1898.<sup>1</sup>

To-day in 1947 the position is possibly rather different. During the phase of reconstruction planning in Simla in the period 1943/45, the "plan" for the Frontier Areas Administration represented scarcely any advance upon the pre-war system of direct administration by the Burma Frontier Service; but the reality appears to be working out rather differently. Economic forces appear to be compelling Great Britain to abandon her military position in Burma which in any case has always been regarded as a frontier outpost of India, and it has come to be realised that it is a political absurdity to give Burma freedom to secede from the Empire while attempting to retain direct control of the Frontier Areas.

Future policy has not yet crystallised. Logic argues that the frontier areas should be thrown in with the new "free Burma" to work out their own salvation, but a weighty body of public opinion is still capable of waxing sentimental about "British obligations to the minorities", and "the need to repay Britain military debt to the loyal Karens, Chins and Kachins". The argument seems to be that given a little more time of direct or semi-direct administration it will be possible to educate the primitive peoples of the hills to take their



place in the sophisticated Burmese state.

Yet surely this is a delusion. So long as the peoples of the hills are in any way protected by a paternal paramount power from the economic whirlwinds of the outside world then their progress towards sophistication will be slower than that of their neighbours. Under any form of British protection the cultural gap between the frontier people and the Burmese will constantly grow greater, and this can only serve to increase antagonisms and make ultimate integration more difficult.

The form of "protection" that is at present contemplated is not at all clear from recent newspaper despatches. It appears that four minority nationalities are to be recognised - Karen, Shan, Kachin and Chin. The first will apparently be integrated from the start into the Burmese state, while the other three groups will at first be in a sort of federal relation with the Burmese at the centre

"provision is made for the preservation of the existing autonomy in the internal administration of these Frontier Areas. Their citizens will be guaranteed 'the rights and privileges which are regarded as fundamental in democratic countries'. It is also stipulated that the agreement is without prejudice to the financial autonomy already vested in the Shan States Federation or to the financial assistance which the Kachin Hills and the Chin Hills are entitled to receive from the revenues of Burma." 1.

The outcome of such a form of federation will depend upon

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1. The Times 13.2.47.  
dispatch on the Panglong Agreement.

the interpretation of the clause relating to financial assistance to the hills and upon the way the boundaries are drawn between Burma and the federal dependencies.

The Shan States as a block are economically self sufficient but the Kachin Hills and the Chin Hills are economic absurdities unless the boundaries are so drawn that these special areas include substantial areas of plains land bordering upon the hills proper. I must confess that the proposed form of overall organisation does not appear to me very practical.

It may perhaps be thought that I have laid too much stress upon my attack upon the convention that language is to be deemed a critical factor of cultural separation. But the fact is that this dogma is still very generally held even among anthropologists. Nadel's study of the Nupe<sup>1</sup> is one of the very few works to make it clear that language is not necessarily critical in this sense. Evans Pritchard<sup>2</sup> makes his category of "a people" turn on the factor of common language; Kluckhohn and Kelly who have recently made a study of the "concept of culture" conclude among other things that language is a critical determinant

"Some of the most critical premises of a culture are often unstated..... but are transmitted through the language. Especially the morphology of a language preserves the unformulated philosophy of the group" 3.

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1. Nadel (1) 13.
  2. Evans Pritchard (1), 5.
  3. Kluckhohn (1), 100.



So long as such dogmas prevail, an area with the linguistic diversity of Burma is bound to be conceived of sociologically from the extreme atomistic point of view. This again has bearings upon the relations that may exist between the mode of anthropological theory and the intellectual or political climate of the day.

My view is that if the social continuum is conceived in atomistic terms then administrative policy is likely to develop along lines which will tend to produce just such an atomistic structure as theory postulates. In this sense the anthropological view that would interpret the Burma data as revealing a large number of virtually discrete societies belongs to the political climate of 19th Century liberalism, when peace was to be achieved through the mystique of laissez faire and a balance of power among innumerable small scale self determined nationalities. Personally I do not feel that anthropologists are wholly free to indulge their theoretical fancies, if their thinking is to lead to the ultimate Balkanisation of about half the globe!

### Review of Theoretical Propositions

I propose now to review once more some of the theoretical propositions put forward in the first Chapter.

My own view is that the concept of separate distinguishable cultures needs to be abandoned. "A culture" is useful to me only as a frame of descriptive reference. Diachronically its

human content is not in any way fixed. In contrast, the concept of separate distinguishable societies, though legitimate, seems to me to be deprived of value through the extremely wide range of meaning in which the word is applied. Radcliffe Brown has justified his claim that the subject matter of Social Anthropology is the "study and comparison of human societies" by defining a society as being composed of the inhabitants "of any locality of suitable size".<sup>1</sup> This is not very helpful. We can only usefully compare social groupings of the same scale, or at any rate social groupings which are in some respect homologous in structure; if these units of study are to be termed societies, we need a more adequate definition than has been proposed so far.

The social anthropologist's techniques are specially adapted for the study of local communities, and I suggest that it might be well if social theory was adapted accordingly. It is not true that a community is necessarily a part of a single culture - however culture may be defined; and to say that a community is either "a society" or a part of "a society" disguises the fact that as the term is usually defined it is quite certainly a part of many different societies.

In recent years the development of social anthropology has tended to follow two slightly divergent courses. Malinowski wrote of cultures as if they were an amalgam of neatly



integrated institutions; Radcliffe Brown wrote of societies with comparable anatomical structures. In this book I have studied both institutions and social structures but I have eschewed either cultures or societies. I consider this is the logical outcome of my position. In mathematical terms we need an extra dimension to our conceptualisation of the social system; we must so reorientate our theories that one or more of our presumed constants are recognised as variables. Currently, Anthropologists seem to be very fond of the word "dynamics",<sup>1</sup> but the forms of social motion that they study seem to me very stiff jointed. They need to get beyond the schoolboy stage where all activity is conveniently held to be taking place in the plane of the paper. The social dynamic that has been considered up to now has been in large measure the dynamic (functional) organisation of closed societies; the next step should be the study of the dynamics of the social continuum as a whole.

That does not imply that we must throw away all the concepts and devices that have been devised in the course of simpler studies, though we may have to discard some and modify others. With a more complex field of data we may need a more elaborate calculus for its analysis, but not necessarily an entirely new one.

The point that I have stressed in this book is that

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1. Cf. titles. Fortes (1) & (11);  
Malinowski (11) Herskovits (1), 146.

situations may arise in which although the activities of a particular community may be interpreted as arising from the functional interrelations of a system of institutions, yet these institutions considered independently may have different total fields. If the ramifications of relationship of a particular household be considered as an expression of kinship, of religion, of economics, of legal obligation, of politics and so on, then each of these institutions may represent the relations of a different total group of individuals. In some cases the coincidence between different institutional groups may be considerable; in others it may be very slight. The "Malinowski type" of integrated closed society is merely the special case where all institutional fields coincide completely.

In my view it is not, as Herskovits has recently suggested, simply a question of gestalt - of the whole being something more than the components parts, of a "multiplicity of patterns which make up the culture as a whole";<sup>1</sup> my argument is that there is no unique whole. The community which any particular anthropological field worker studies is merely the area of overlap of a number of institutional fields.

This approach, it seems to me, greatly simplifies our conceptualisation of the processes of culture change. Everyone admits the fact of culture change; and nearly everyone

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1. Herskovits (1), 158.



admits that change is a normal phenomenon, but so long as the conceptualisation is in terms of integrated closed societies, the interpretation of change is very difficult - it involves such concepts as the impact, or the contact or the assimilation of whole cultures and this clearly does not fit the facts.

In the North Burma area, with its extreme contrasts of terrain between alluvial plain and precipitous hillside, it is almost inconceivable that the inhabitants of the two types of country could ever be in all respects culturally identical over any considerable period of time. The modern Shan of Momauk in the Bhamo plain would be a complete "fish out of water" at Sinlum 15 miles away (and 6000 feet higher up); the inhabitant of Sinlum, as a type, would be equally out of place at Momauk. But that doesn't imply a lack of cultural contact between the two local communities. Nor does it imply that contact between these contrasted communities created a third cultural entity as Malinowski would apparently have argued. There could clearly be contact and persistent modification of both groups over long periods without any coalescence or total absorption of one by the other. These two local communities are merely points in a large continuum in constant flux. An infinite variety of influences tending towards change operate upon all parts of the continuum at all times, but the tendencies are not all in

the same direction at the same moment; I can see no reason whatever to postulate any general drift towards either equilibrium or cultural homogeneity.

Granted the concept of a continuum in flux which can be analysed in terms of non coincident institutional fields, then change can be conceptualised as resulting from a local modification of the influence of particular institutions. The evidence I have produced in this book is an indication of what I mean.

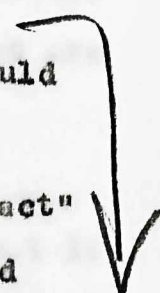
Some Kachins have on occasions tended to become Shans or Assamese or Burmans or Chinese. This tendency can be seen to be a response to a large number of factors of which I have picked out the economic as the most clearly analysable. This cultural change involves a shift in all the institutional aspects of life - a change in the political structure, a change in demographic organisation, a change in religion and so on; these changes are not synchronised and it is therefore misleading to represent the process as one of causality. For example anthropologists sometimes represent change as being gauged by christianisation, because in certain fields of change the shift in religion is the first to become apparent; but in the data I have presented we find that both in Assam and in Burma the religious change - conversion to Buddhism - was chronologically the last event of a series. There may be significance in this, but I would hesitate to press it far at



this stage.

Of great interest, it seems to me, is the evidence of the reversability of certain types of change. I have quoted several well documented instances in the course of this book, notably the case of the Phakeal Shams in Chapter VI and the case of the Mahtang chiefs in Chapter VII. This type of case is very important because it demonstrates the necessity of some such conceptualisation as that of a continuum in respect to which individuals and groups can shift position both backwards and forwards. Existing types of culture change theory mostly have as their end product either a mixture of two pre-existing cultures or else a new phoenix-like product arisen from the ashes of the old. Either type of theory seems to visualise an irreversible process; you cannot unscramble the eggs!

It is possible of course, as some anthropologists would do - the wilsons for example, - to have two separate theories. One for changes due to western "culture contact" which are irreversible, - and usually disastrous - , and another for the virtuous changes that arise through internal evolution, and might possibly be deemed reversible. Frankly this seems to me a wholly undesirable theoretical development. It may perhaps be useful to regard "western culture contact" as a special case, but to treat it as a totally different species of phenomenon subject to different rules of development from all other forms of change is preposterous. Such an



approach could only have been devised by africanists with their hyperconsciousness of black-white contrasts. In the Orient where the European is only one of many palpable influences towards change, it is easier to perceive that "culture contact" in its usual sense is only one variant of a general process.

That is not to say that the overt symptoms of change introduced by Europeans are not very different from those which are due to Asiatic influence.

One of the consequences of the arbitrary division of change processes into two types, evolutionary and diffusionist, is that there has been a tendency to give all species of "foreign influence" the same value as factors of evolution. In fact, I suggest, we need greatly to refine our concept of "foreign". In the example studied in this book, Burmese are clearly more foreign to Kachins, than are Shans, and Englishmen are more foreign than either.

Reverting to my concept of a continuum, I suggest that if all change be considered as the response to cultural interaction between elements of two parts of the continuum then the type of the change reaction will vary according to the degree of separation in the continuum between the two reacting elements.

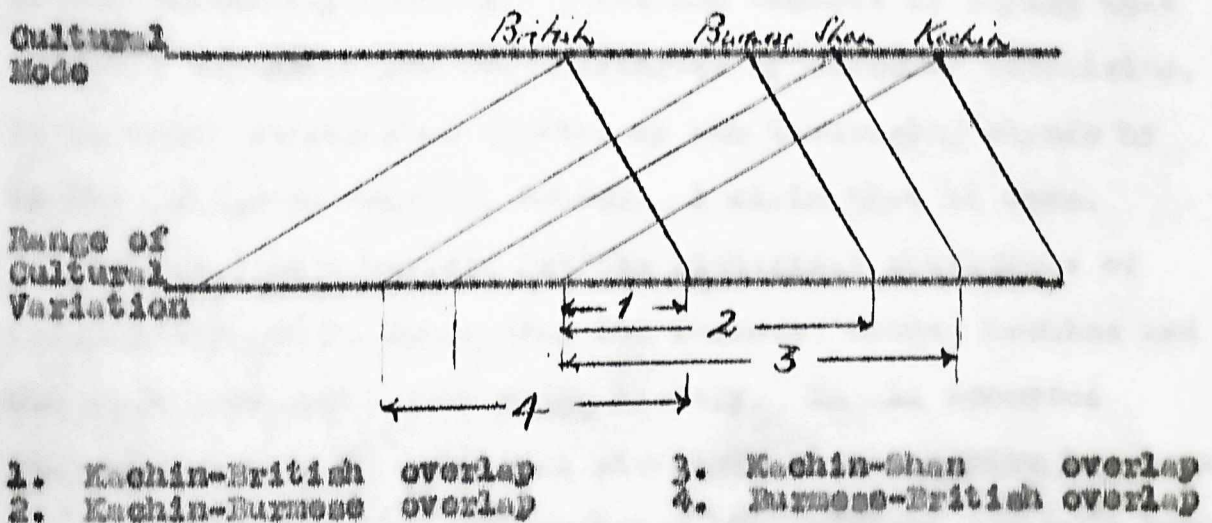
On this analogy "cultures" labelled British, Burmese, Shan, Kachin may be viewed as a continuous series in a single



continuum; but while Burmese, Shan and Kachin cultures overlap extensively at the institutional level the comparable overlap between British and Burmese institutions is small and between British and Kachin institutions very much smaller. Smooth changes from the Kachin to the Burmese pattern are thus much more easily accomplished than smooth changes from the Kachin to the British pattern.

### Diagram X

Diagram to illustrate the concept of varying degrees of cultural contrast within a single continuum.



When, in Chapter I, I criticized the Wilsons' Analysis of Social Change, I suggested nevertheless that some of its conceptual innovations might prove valuable. The Wilsons' argument in relation to "even" and "uneven scale" is what I had in mind. The terminology seems to me unsatisfactory, but the ideology is useful. The Wilsons are here aiming at

criteria for assessing the degree of "foreignness" in extra cultural diffusionist influences. This concept of variable scale is to some extent analogous to my concept of a cultural continuum in respect to which individual groups can shift position. In either case what is needed is some device for measuring the degree of contrast at the institutional level in a situation of cultural diffusion.

### Theory and "Common Sense".

Since part of my criticism of the atomistic interpretation of the Burma-Assam cultural situation amounts to saying that a simple situation has been distorted by academic theorising, it is worth considering whether my own theorising stands up to the practical test any better. I claim that it does.

With all due allowance for the historical confusions of terminology, it is clear that the Burmese, Shans, Kachins and the rest have had a very mixed history. In all recorded periods the overall political structure at the centre has been chronically unstable. Yet whatever that history may have been, and however confused, it is clear that to a very large extent it is a history common to the peoples of the whole area. Unless we except the (to me quite fabulous) reconstructions put forward by the linguistic experts which claim the relatively recent emergence of Chins, Kachins, Karens and Nagas from some undefined Urheimat in Thibet or the Gobi Desert, then we must



recognise that these hill peoples and their neighbours of the plains - the Shans and the Burmese - have grown up together. At all relevant times - that is to say at the very least for 1500 years past - there have been political and economic interactions between the peoples of the plains and the peoples of the hills in this area. The 8th Century Chinese and Nanchao records mentioned by Luce<sup>1</sup> may not be very reliable on points of detail, but the specific mention of the use of the hillmen as mercenaries by the more sophisticated peoples of the plains is proof that the two groups were in political relation. If this be accepted then it is natural to suppose that through age long interaction the total social field should now possess a common substratum of organisation. Locally the superficial differences may well be considerable, but there should still be a general structural homology common to all areas. If this is true then it is easy to understand how Kachins may become Shans, or Shans and Karens become Burmese. They need only to move into an adjacent patch of the cultural continuum; they do not need to execute a jump half across the board.

On the same analogy a modern Burman should find it easier to "become" English, than the relatively less westernised Kachin. For it is important to realise that so far as the Burmese are concerned the process of westernisation has a long history.

Reporting at the end of the 18th Century Sangermano<sup>1</sup> considered that the somewhat surprising successes of the Burmese against three successive Chinese invasions were mainly due to the "christian gunners" in the Burmese army. These christian gunners were the descendants of Portuguese captured in the 17th Century;<sup>2</sup> their modern descendants can still be traced; they have "become" completely Burmese except that here and there some of them retain their Portuguese names.<sup>3</sup> In the process of Burmanisation however they passed to the Burmese the European skill of gunnery. All through the 19th Century the Burmese regime at Ava and Mandalay was busily adapting the traditional Burmese political structure to fit in with European conventions.<sup>4</sup> Modern Burma has its elected municipal councillors, elected House of Representatives, separate legislature and judiciary and other made to measure European devices.

1. Sangermano (1)
2. Sack of Syriam 1613. Over a century later in 1756 Syriam, now a French and British station, was again taken by the Burmese and the foreigners again reconstituted as gunners. Pearn (1), 6, 9.
3. Pearn (1), 6. The De Souzas, De Silvas and Da Costas who form an important part of the Catholic Anglo-Burman community stem from a late period of Portuguese colonisation. These have now "become" English just as the earlier groups with similar names have "become" Budd Burmese.  
13r
4. Cf. Scott (1) 522/3.



Under the stress of direct British supervision the imitation of the British model has been very close indeed, and one may expect, judging from the events of 1942/45 that if British supervision is withdrawn, there will be a considerable structural reversion back to the forms of 1880. But that does not mean that British political accretions will be jettisoned; they will be merely modified into a Burmese shape.

In contrast the Kachins and most of the other hill peoples<sup>1</sup> have not had this long indoctrination into European modes of organisation. On the contrary the traditional structure has been artificially preserved in its formal aspects; the Kachins still have tract chiefs instead of members of Parliament. But at the same time the reality of the structure has been radically undermined by the missionary assault upon traditional religion and the arbitrary paramountcy of the British Administrative Officers.

How far is it possible to predict future developments on the basis of this analysis? Common sense clearly indicates that the future of the hill peoples is as a part of the Burmese state. Intervention by the British or some other Great Power to prevent this development is always possible, but in the long run seems unlikely. But in the short view it is difficult to make confident predictions.

If in 1885 the hill peoples had been lumped together with

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1. This generalisation does not apply to the Karens who, as a group, are possibly more westernised than the Burmese.

the plains peoples and all classed as Burmese, and this unifying policy confidently pursued, then I have no doubt at all that any latent tendencies to local petty nationalisms would have died out so that by now there would be a Burmese nation. But in practice the policies pursued have given every stimulus to local petty nationalism.

Future developments depend upon British policy; and British policy will be determined by factors extraneous to the immediate situation in Burma itself. But the moral of this book is that whatever policy is pursued the fact of economic interdependence will have to be recognised. Of many possible courses "the protection of the minorities" appears to be the least advantageous for all concerned.



Appendix INote on Matriliney in Burma

For many years ethnographers and historians have been discovering odd pieces of evidence which they have interpreted as survivals from a remote period when matrilineal descent prevailed as a general principle throughout Burma.

Of the modern hill tribes only the Khasis and Garos, lying somewhat to the west of the general area considered in this book, are actually matrilineal today, but a number of authors have claimed to detect indications of a submerged matriliney among their neighbours further to the east. A symmetrical cross cousin marriage, which is a common feature of the formal marriage rules in this area, has for example been interpreted in this way.<sup>1</sup>

The evidence from Burma proper is more convincing; Furnivall summarised its principle features as long ago as 1910.<sup>2</sup> Three items are particularly worthy of note.

(1) The Burmese Kings<sup>3</sup> and also most of the leading Shan Sawbas<sup>4</sup> regularly married one of their half sisters. They also married a large number of other wives<sup>5</sup> and the off-

1. Seligman (i)
2. Furnivall (i) & (ii)  
Cf Ross (i)
3. Scott (i) 59
4. Milne (i) 78
5. Mindohn reputedly had 53 wives and concubines in addition. Scott, idem.

spring of the half sister (the ta-bin-deing) was not necessarily the heir apparent (eing-shay min).

(2) In a number of cases the nattein, priest attendants, and nat gadaw, spirit mediums (lit. "wives of the nat"), of important long established nats are women. Moreover the right to this status, which in some cases is very profitable, is hereditary and the line of succession passes from mother to daughter.<sup>1</sup>

(3) In some documents connected with a Revenue Inquest carried out by the Burmese in 1766<sup>2</sup> it is clearly shown that in certain villages in the Pagan area, not only were the village headmen (yuathugyi) women, but the succession definitely passed from mother to daughter.

This evidence is taken to imply that Burma as a whole was formerly matrilineal but that the introduction of Buddhism from India served to eliminate most of the matrilineal characteristics leaving a small residue in the form of "survivals".

I am not prepared to contradict this interpretation dogmatically but I would point out that what the evidence, taken at its face value, does seem to show is not that matrilineal descent prevailed before patrilineal descent but that both

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Carver  
1. Coster (i)  
2. Furnivall (ii)



descent rules were current at the same time.

If my interpretation of Burmese village structure is correct then, under pre-British conditions, inheritance of rights in land passed more or less equally to sons and daughters and villages were largely endogamous. Under such conditions in the early stages of the formation of a village settlement most members would be able to trace descent from the founder through either of their parents. Assuming then the principle functional role of the thugyi is to carry out certain rituals at the shrine of the founder ancestor, or guardian nat, to ensure fertility of the crops, then it is largely a matter of chance whether the thugyi so chosen will be a woman descended through women or a man descended through men.

It is interesting to reconsider the evidence provided by the Revenue Inquest of 1766 in the light of this argument.

The total number of villages covered by the record is not stated, but of these there were only four where the post of thugyi clearly followed the female line; in two cases there were women thugyi subordinate to males, but the line of descent is not recorded; in one case the post of thugyi seems to follow the female line but the woman thugyi's husband is also a thugyi; in two cases "there was a double line of thugyis, one male and one female, in one of these cases the extant male and female thugyi were married, in the other they

were not. "In all other cases sons succeeded to their fathers". That the thugyi's functions were concerned with ritual rather than administration seems probable. Furnivall notes "one girl succeeded to the headmanship at 8 years old. There are cases in other villages where boys succeeded at an age almost as youthful. There is no mention of a trustee... The duties cannot have been arduous."

Among the Burmese, bride-price transactions are of nominal dimensions but to some extent a bride-price is worked out in labour. According to Scott, "after marriage the couple almost always live for two or three years in the house of the bride's parents, the son in law becoming one of the family and contributing to its support". Furnivall elaborates this and in doing so has to admit that Burmese villages are anything but exogamous, - as of course they ought to be to satisfy his ideas of "matriarchal vestiges". "It is true that marriage between residents of the same village is now the rule, and that no trace of systematic exogamy can be found. But it is noticeable that there is a large proportion of marriages between residents of different villages and that in such cases it is an almost if not quite invariable custom for the man to settle in the wife's village.

The fact that certain of the great nats have matrilineally ordered attendants is similarly no evidence that matriliney was



once general. The great nats with their large scale widely known festivities are only village guardian nats which through some past historical accident have grown celebrated. If such are derived from villages where the thugyi descent happened to be reckoned in the female line, then the nattein of the enlarged ritual would similarly follow a female inheritance. There seems to be no general rule. Thus while in the case of the famous Bodawgyi, a male nat of Alon, the status of nattein passes regularly from mother to daughter,<sup>1</sup> in the case of Ame Yeyin, a female nat of Zidaw, not far away, the three nattein in 1933 were "Maung San Myun and his brother, and a sister who is wife of the Zidaw headman".<sup>2</sup> All of which seems thoroughly bilateral and in accordance with my theory. However in the absence of any first hand sociological study of the significance of Burmese nat worship it is useless to attempt any deep analysis.

Similarly the evidence concerning the marriage of Burmese Kings to their half sisters is too indefinite to warrant any firm interpretation. So far as the evidence goes it seems to support the idea that descent in Burma was traditionally bilateral rather than unilateral on either side.

Without pressing the point too far I suggest that varieties of land tenure and principles of descent can each, in a rice economy, be correlated with technical mode and population

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1. Coster (i) 99.

2. Ibid p.105.

pressure.

677.

with shifting agriculture, critical population pressures, and individual tenure rights at a minimum, ownership rests with the lineage. Fission of a local group, when it occurs, is then the fission of a lineage segment. For such a structure a unilinear descent system is necessary but it matters little whether the line is male or female.

With fixed holdings, and low population pressures tenure rests with individuals and families. Local group fission however is unnecessary and undesirable so that individual rights are unstressed. Land is worked jointly despite individual holdings, and this is consistent with a high degree of village endogamy and bilateral descent.

Finally with fixed holdings, and critical population pressures, such as pertain in India and China there is a tendency for individuals and simple family to assert their rights as against the joint interest of the village kin group as a whole. Unilateral descent then re-emerges as a principle of inheritance but the depth of the effective lineage remains minimal. Individual holdings become broken up into a large number of scattered small plots, to the general detriment of efficiency.

It might be interesting to examine the contemporary breakdown of the Hindu joint family in the light of this argument.



Appendix II

Text of act of submission of Singpho Chiefs "signed" at  
Sadiya 5th May 1826.

"Whereas we, the Singpho chiefs named Bam, Komjoy, Meejong, Jow, Chowkhen, Jowrah, Chow, Chumun, Neenjun, Tangrang, Chowval, Chumta, Chowra, Chowdoe, Chowkam, Koomring, etc. are under the subjection of the British Government. We execute this agreement to Mr David Scott, the agent to the Governor General and hereby engage to adhere to the following terms, viz: 1st Assam being under the sway of the British Government, we and our dependent Singphos, who were subjects of the Assam state, acknowledge subjection to that Government. We agree not to side with the Burmese, or any other king, not to commit any aggressions whatever; but we will obey the orders of the British Government.

2ndly. Whenever a British force may march to Assam, to protect it from foreign aggression, we will supply that force with grain etc.; make and repair roads for it, and execute any order that may be issued to us; and we shall, on our doing so, be protected by that force.

3rd. If we abide by the terms of this agreement, no tribute shall be paid by us; but if any Assam Paicks, of their own accord reside in our villages, the tax on such Paicks shall be paid to the British Government.

4th. We will set at large, or cause to be liberated any Assam people whom we may have seized, and they shall have the option to reside wherever they please.

5th. If any Singphos rob any of the Assam people residing in our country, we will apprehend the former, and surrender him to the British Government; but if we fail to do so we will make good the loss thus sustained by the latter.

6th. We will govern and protect the Singphos under us, as heretofore, and adjust their differences; and if any boundary dispute occur amongst us, we will not take up arms without the knowledge of the British Government.

7th. We will adhere to the terms of this agreement, and never depart from them. This agreement shall be binding upon our brothers, sons, nephews and relatives in such a way as the Agent to the Governor General shall deem proper. We have executed this agreement in the presence of many.  
Written at Sudeeah, 5th May 1826 A.D."

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References in Part I. refer explicitly to the Assam-Burma-Yunnan-Indo China area. Part II is merely a key to miscellaneous references mentioned in the text.

Part I. aims at completeness for the Kachin Hills Area only for the period preceding 1900. It thus supersedes the bibliography given by Weh\*11. For later periods all references to the Kachin Hills Area which have come to my notice are included but the list is not comprehensive.

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Part 111; Ethn Ans IV.Part 111.



# ABBREVIATIONS

Anth	-	Anthropos.
Anth. Anz	-	Anthropologische Anzerges (Stuttgart)
Census Assam/Burma (year) Rep	-	Census of India, (year), Assam/Burma. Part.I. Report.
Eth. Anz	-	Athnologische Anzerges (Stuttgart)
Geo. J.	-	Geographical Journal.
J. A. S. B.	-	Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal (Calcutta)
J. B. R. S.	-	Journal of the Burma Research Society (Rangoon)
J. Ind. Archs	-	Journal of the Indian Archipelago (Singapore)
J. R. A. I.	-	Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute.
J. R. A. S.	-	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (London)
J. R. G. S.	-	Journal of the Royal Geographical Society (London)
M. A. S. B.	-	Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal (Calcutta)
Proc. A. S. B.	-	Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal (Calcutta)
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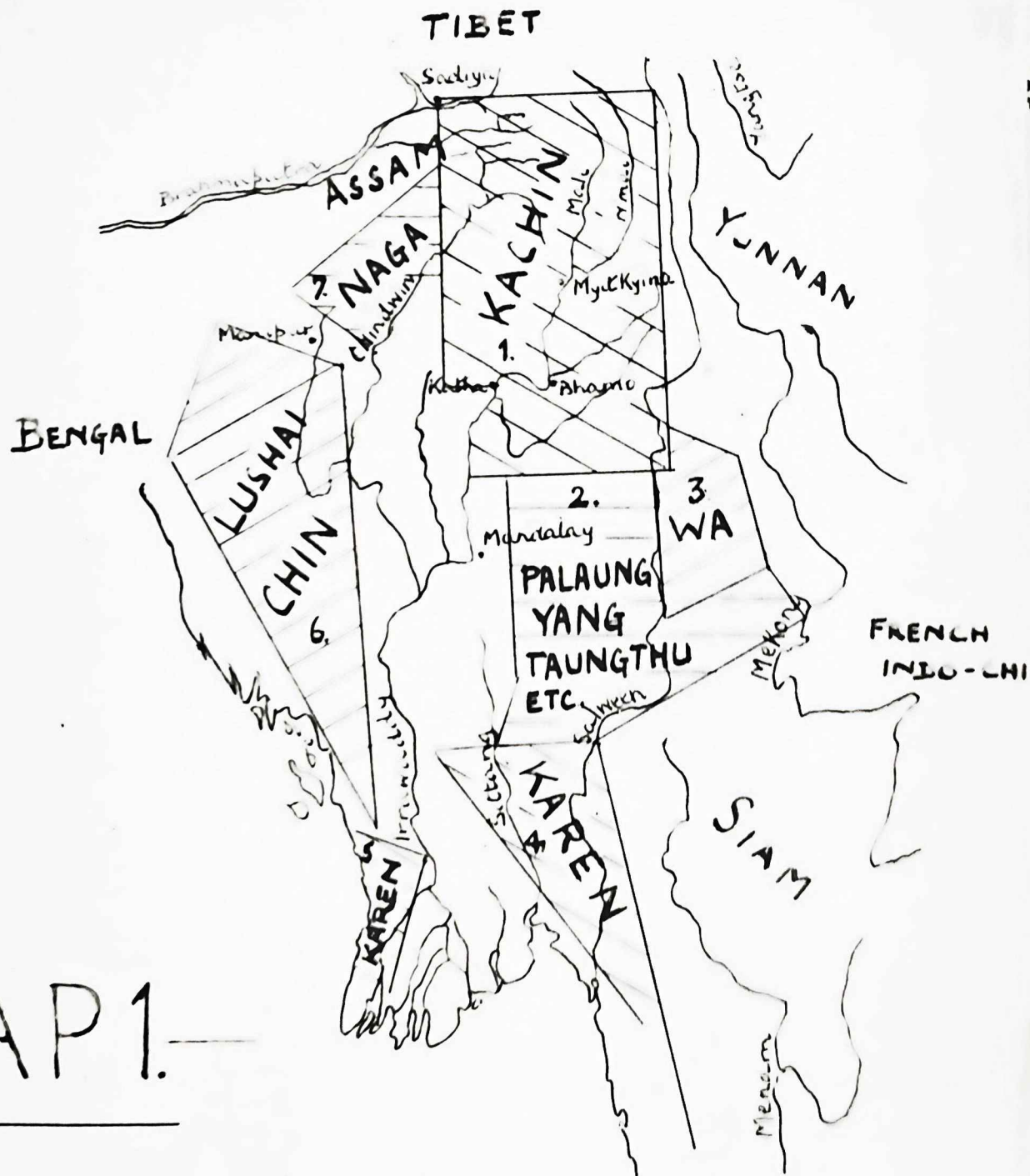
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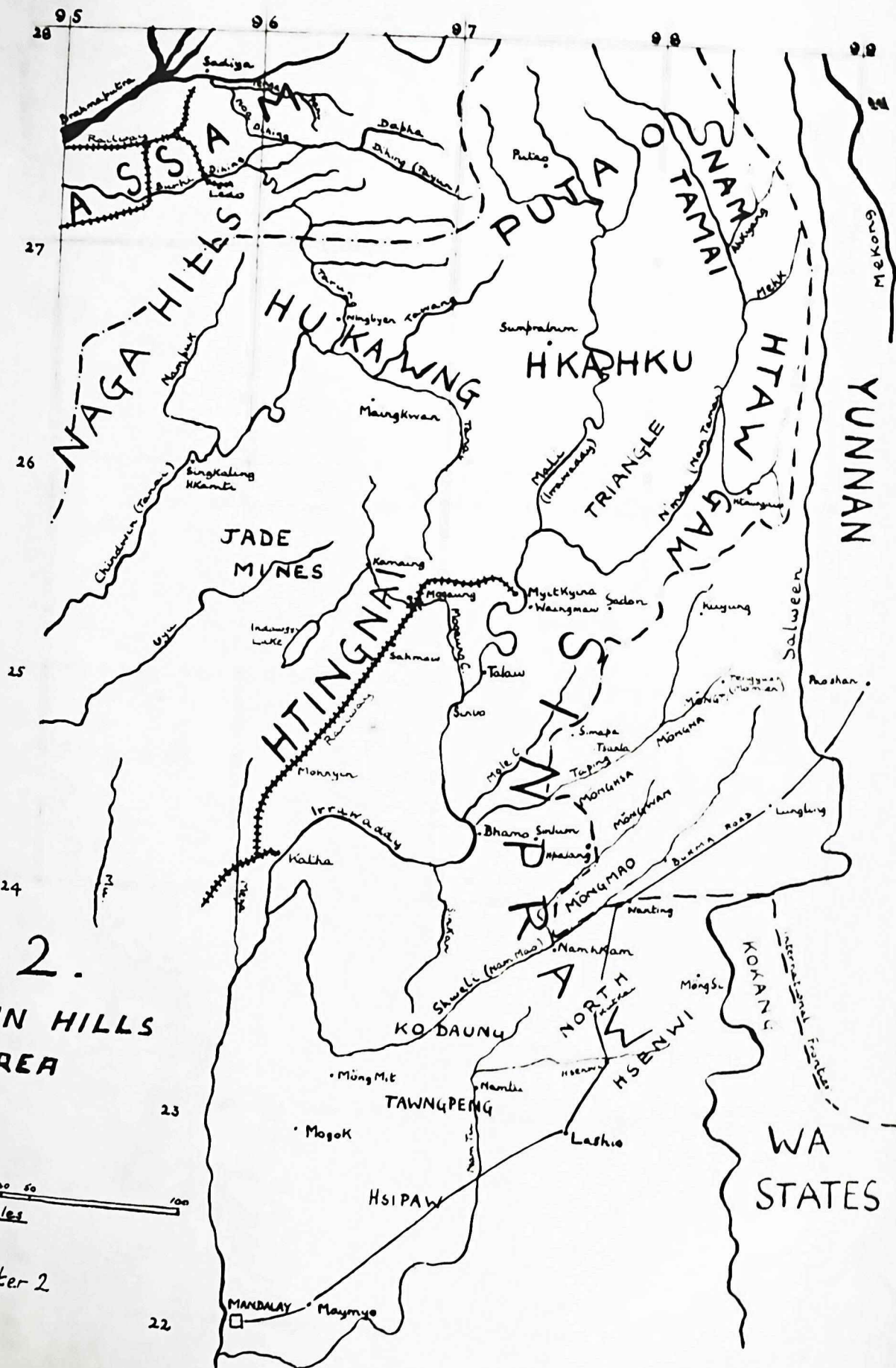


# MAP 1.



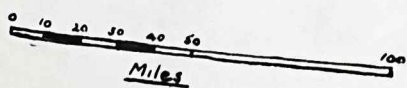
Map to illustrate the geographical distribution of the major cultural categories among the hill peoples in the Burma Area (See Chapters 2 and 5)

Note : The valley dwelling people in areas 1, 2 and 3 are mostly Shan



MAP 2.  
KACHIN HILLS  
AREA

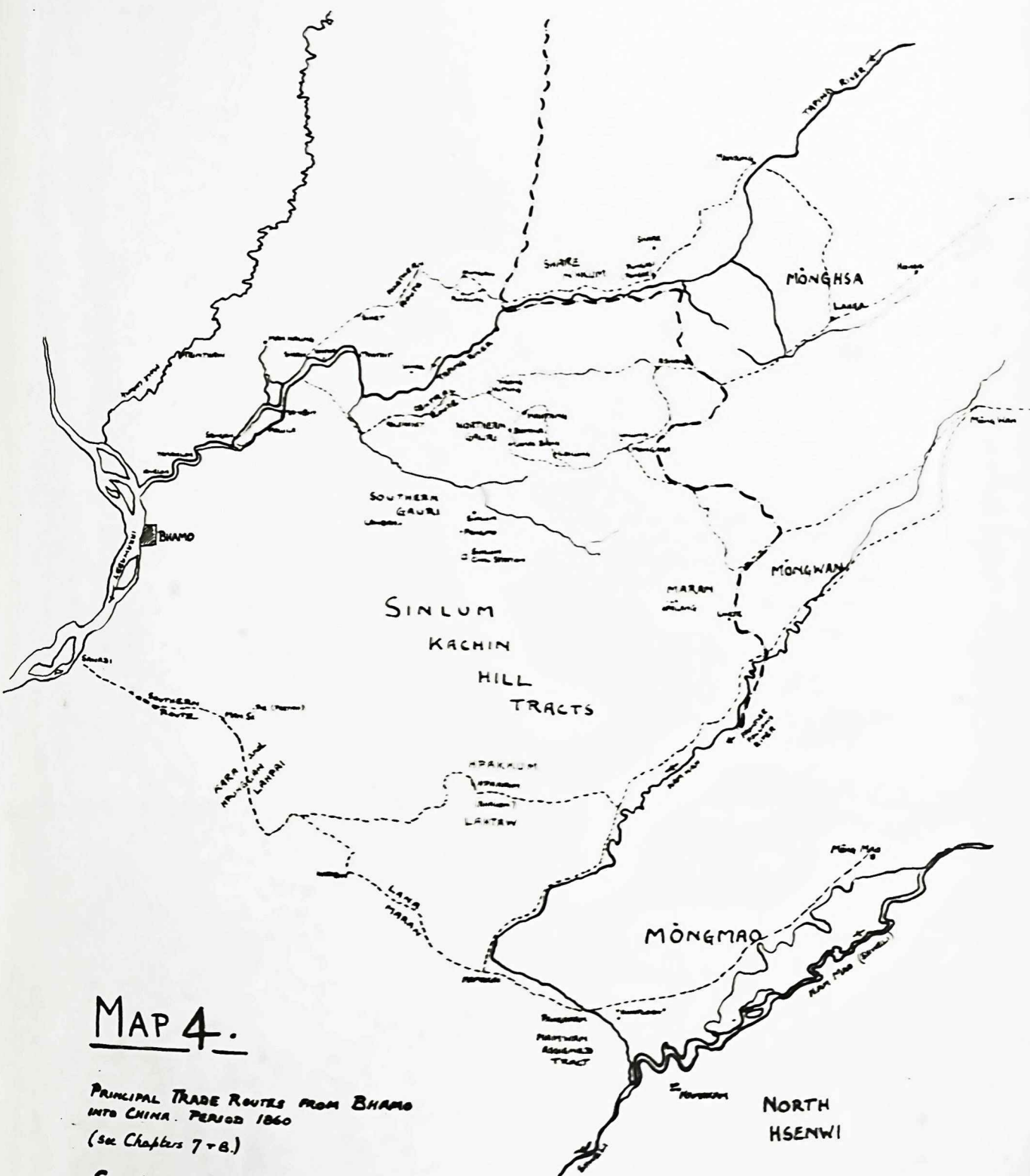
Scale:



See Chapter 2







## MAP 4.

PRINCIPAL TRADE ROUTES FROM BHAMO  
INTO CHINA. PERIOD 1860  
(see Chapters 7 + 8.)

Scale: MILES.



